



WILD

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**IUCN Red List
Helping In
Conservation**

**THE LAST
GIBs OF
GUJARAT**

Chief Editors



Megh Roy Choudhury



Ritesh Nangare



Prasanna AV

Editorial Team



Rhucha Kulkarni Yasir Mehmood



Ishaan Sengupta



Rufous-necked Hornbill, male

Rufous-necked Hornbill

It was always a dream for me as a birder to see the mesmerizing beauty of the mountains of northeastern India and the most colorful birds of the northeast. So, I and some of my friends finally planned a birding tour to Darjeeling. Finally the day arrived on April 14, 2017 and we headed to Bagdogra from Bangalore and from there we were taken to Lava. After 4 days of wonderful birding at Lava (Neora Valley, Russet, Rishop) we headed to Latpanchar (Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary), which is known for the mighty Rufous-necked Hornbills and many more beautiful hill birds. We were all excited to have a glimpse of the beautiful giant – the rufous-necked hornbill. Our birding guide directed us to a short track very close to our homestay, where they had already tracked a breeding pair of these birds. When we arrived there it was almost 11AM and since the area is a hill station there wasn't harsh light and the lighting was pretty impressive. All of us took our positions and sat waiting for the male bird to arrive to the giant tree (where female was nesting) and feed the female with berries. We were at a safe distance from the nesting tree to avoid disturbance to the birds, but we had places where we could get clear glimpses of the bird through the foreground foliage. To our surprise, the male arrived just in ten minutes and already had started feeding the female. We were all stunned to look at the majestic beauty. In first attempt I couldn't make any good frames, as we had no knowledge about the movement of the bird. Thereafter, the male took over half an hour to arrive at the spot, and this time I had taken a position where the male would possibly rest after feeding the female, and the perch was ideal, covered with a lot of dried foliage and mosses making it picture perfect with the green hills making the background. And with a slice of good fortune on my part, the male arrived precisely to the very spot and rested for about a minute and it was just enough for us to get some lovely images. It was a moment of sheer joy to watch the magnificent beauty in a perfect setting and get some decent photographs of this bird, which was at the top of our wish list. Then after giving us ample time to photograph, the bird disappeared into the hills in search of berries. With total contentment, we headed back to our homestay.

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Magazine Designing - Sandeep Solkar

Executive Committee - Ashish Dwivedi, Dharuman Nanjan, Sameer Khan, Krishnamurrthy, Abhay Kewat

Cover Page Credit - Devesh Gadhavi

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CONTENTS

Cover Story

Last GIBs Of Gujarat

Devesh Gadhavi



Photo Stories

Landscapes From The Arctic

Hans Peter Deutsch

Emotions In Primates

Anja Wessels

The Phantom Of The Forest

Praveen Siddannavar

A Roar Which Has Fallen Silent

Pramod Kumar P Laxmin

Ornate Flying Snake

Rahul Alvares

The Greater Flamingo

Dilipsinh Chudasama

Travelogue

Manas National Park

Anu Marwah

Rio Grande - A Birding Haven

Suraj Ramamurthy

Sambath Subbaiah

Natural History

Ants : The Insect Superpower

Indraneel Mukherjee

Workflow

From Darkness Towards Light

Dr Hitesh Patel

Conserve Or Perish

IUCN Red List

Aiding in Conservation

Megh Roy Choudhury

Prized Catch

Indian Wolf In Sunderbans

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin

Special Features

Image Of The Month

From Our Facebook Group

Stand Alone Images

The principal threat to wildlife at present is habitat loss. The main culprit as we painfully know is human being himself. In the name of progress, development and modernisation, we are destroying nature with our own hands. A recent significant incident involved felling of trees on both sides of National Highway 717 from Maynaguri to Chalsa. The land is in a forest area of Bichabhanga, near Gorumara National Park, in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The alleged purpose is to construct an overbridge over a railway crossing and a mind boggling three thousand trees are marked to be sacrificed. A totally irrational idea, as only two trains use the said crossing once everyday. As soon as the news percolated, protests were being held by the local environment activists and forest dependents to appeal to the local authority to restrain from felling the trees. On 6th April, 2017, the authorities went with police personnels to commence the diversion of forest land by felling of trees. On 7th April, 2017, they continued felling the trees in the above mentioned area despite the objections raised by the local people. The incidence of felling of trees despite protests was reported in newspaper dailies. Having no other alternative, Society For Protecting Ophiofauna And Animal Rights (SPOAR), a public spirited environment organization, is fiercely opposing this and has moved to the Calcutta High Court, on the virtue of the Times Of India newspaper report dated 7th March, 2017. The honourable High Court passed an interim order staying the felling of trees. National Green Tribunal in order dated on 13th April, 2017, heard both parties and extended the stay. It also ruled that obtaining clearance under Section 2 of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, is necessary before taking up any project of such nature. The unfortunate trees are spared at present, but for how long, remains to be seen.

However, such atrocities should be dealt with a similar kind of passion and dedication.



Megh Roy Choudhury
Editor in Chief



© S P Pandey

NH 717 on the periphery of the Gorumara National Park

The Last GIBs of Gujarat

Cover Story



One of the most magnificent birds of our country, the Great Indian Bustard is on the verge of extinction. Despite the fervent conservation measures directed to safeguard the existing yet dwindling numbers, the end appears to be quite near. Once prevalent in many parts of the subcontinent, now this magnificent bird has a meagre presence, mainly in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Biggest hurdles for their existence has been the alteration of habitat for agriculture, urbanisation and development. Devesh Gadhavi, a well known crusader for GIB, warns us about the imminent threats our feathered friend is facing in the state of Gujarat.

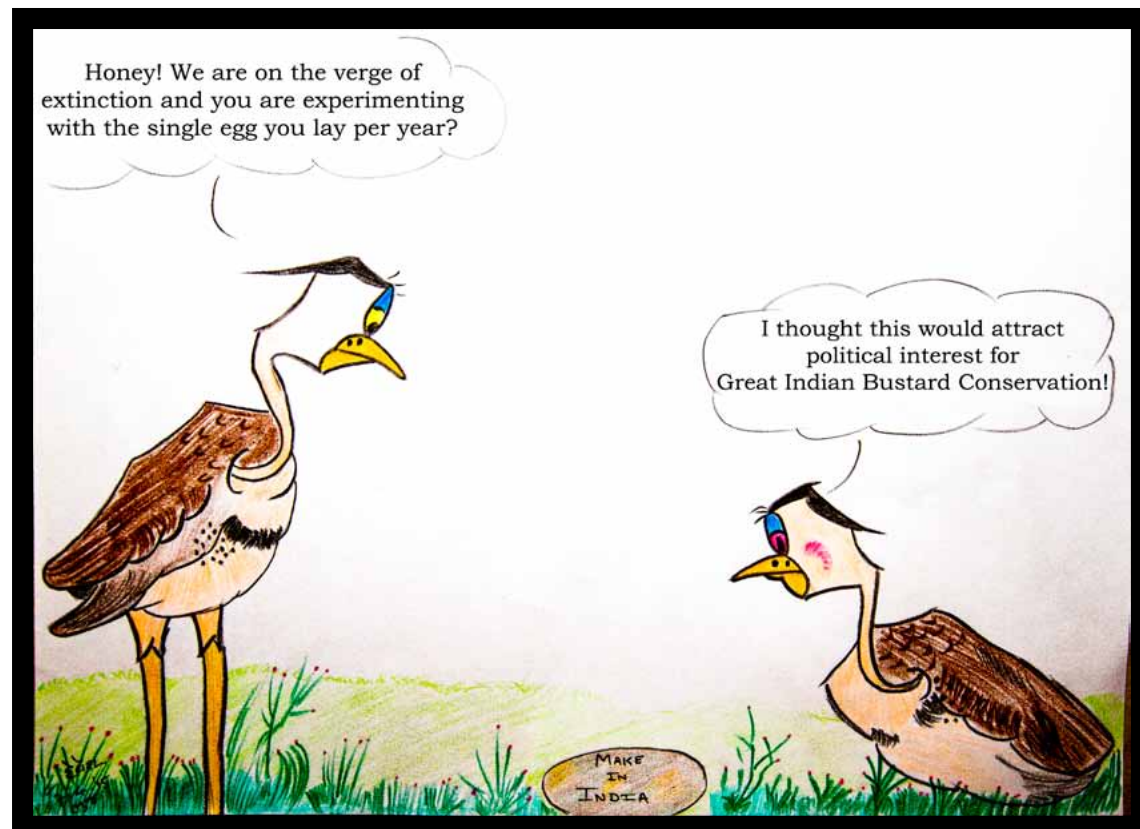
Devesh Gadhavi

Many of you [particularly the readers who are not active wildlifers] might be unaware about the GIB (Great Indian Bustard), a bird species shown in various photographs in this article. There is nothing to hesitate about it, because probably thousands or even lakhs of people in India are completely unaware of this bird. So, before we go ahead with this article, let's have a brief introduction about this majestic bird species.

GIB is a bird only found in India. Today less than 250 GIBs are left on the face of Earth. It's a one meter tall bird that prefers to live in the grasslands during its breeding season (during monsoon in Gujarat), and for the rest of the time of the year, i.e. during winter and summer, it prefers to live in open, undisturbed land and/or harvested fields of Sorghum and Millet. They feed mainly on the insects, and hence GIB is truly a "farmer's friend" and its presence can never be problematic to the farmers. Moreover, GIB also feeds on the small reptiles, berries or fruits of Zizyphus and Capparis and fallen grains of the harvested agricultural fields.

In our nation GIB is surviving in the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. According to one estimation, there are about 60-70 birds in Rajasthan, less than 30 in Gujarat and a total population of less than 30 birds surviving in rest of the states. Albeit on the basis of scientific studies, its global population is believed to be between 50-249 individuals which means that there are more than 50 but less than 250 GIBs struggling to survive across the globe.

Till 1950-60s, GIBs were sighted in the Saurashtra region and Kutch district of Gujarat. Gradually, the habitat of this species came under pressure of agriculture and other development, which resulted in the loss of habitat for the species. In addition to this, the rampant hunting of GIB was also prevalent in India which resulted in a steep decline of its population. Here, it is very much essential to understand that this species lays mostly one egg per year, hence the recruitment rate is also very low and slow. All these situations have collectively led the species to the verge of extinction.



In 1960s, Salim Ali, the renowned ornithologist of India, had recommended this species as the "National Bird" of India and had informed that this would make the common man aware about the importance of this species which would help in its conservation. Unfortunately, his dream couldn't be completed and as per his assumption the population of GIB dwindled down rapidly. As per a study carried out in 1969, there were about 1260 GIBs in India then, this number has declined to less than 250 birds today. The bird that was declared as "threatened species" in the 1980s, has come on the verge of extinction today. Despite this, today most of the people in India are unaware about the GIBs and its existence in India. We all feel proud of the existence of Asiatic Lion in Gir and Indian Wild Ass in the Little Rann Of Kutch which is surely a good thing. Sadly, at the same time the presence of the GIB, locally known as "Ghorad" in Gujarat, which is our 'Natural Heritage', is vanishing from our minds.

Extinction of a species from the mindset of the society before the actual extinction of the species from wild, is the worst thing that can happen to any individual species. In Gujarat, the GIB is surviving in the Abdasa and to a certain extent in the Mandvi taluka of the Kutch district.



The GIB has the distribution range of about 1000 sq kms of which 250 sq kms is a very crucial and sensitive habitat for the GIBs. It's an apathy that for such a rare bird, a mere 2 sq.kms area in Kutch, i.e. 'The Kutch Bustard Sanctuary', has been declared protected.

Owing to the small size of the sanctuary, most of the GIBs in Kutch are struggling to survive outside the protected area. These areas consist of revenue lands of approximately 30 villages and few small patches owned by the Gujarat Forest Department. Unfortunately, all these areas are termed as "waste land" which are actually the prime wildlife habitats.

Recently in the year 2013, the Hon'ble Govt. Of India had released a very detailed and scientific guideline for the recovery of the critically endangered GIB. As per this guideline, development of power lines, windmills and pylons can be fatal to this

species. Hence it is recommended that none of such infrastructural development should be allowed in or around the bustard habitat. In the recent past, the mortality of GIBs has been reported due to the collision with power lines in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. During the year 2014, one adult female GIB had died in Abdasa taluka of Kutch district in Gujarat due to the collision with power lines. It is also interesting to note that various scientific researches have revealed that the bustards have a poor vision and hence the probability of their collision with the power lines is much higher than other species.

Even a single death, due to the anthropogenic activities, can leave a fatal impact on the entire population of a species like GIB, especially when the species is on the verge of extinction, laying mostly one egg per year and which needs human support for its long term survival.



Death of a GIB by electrocution

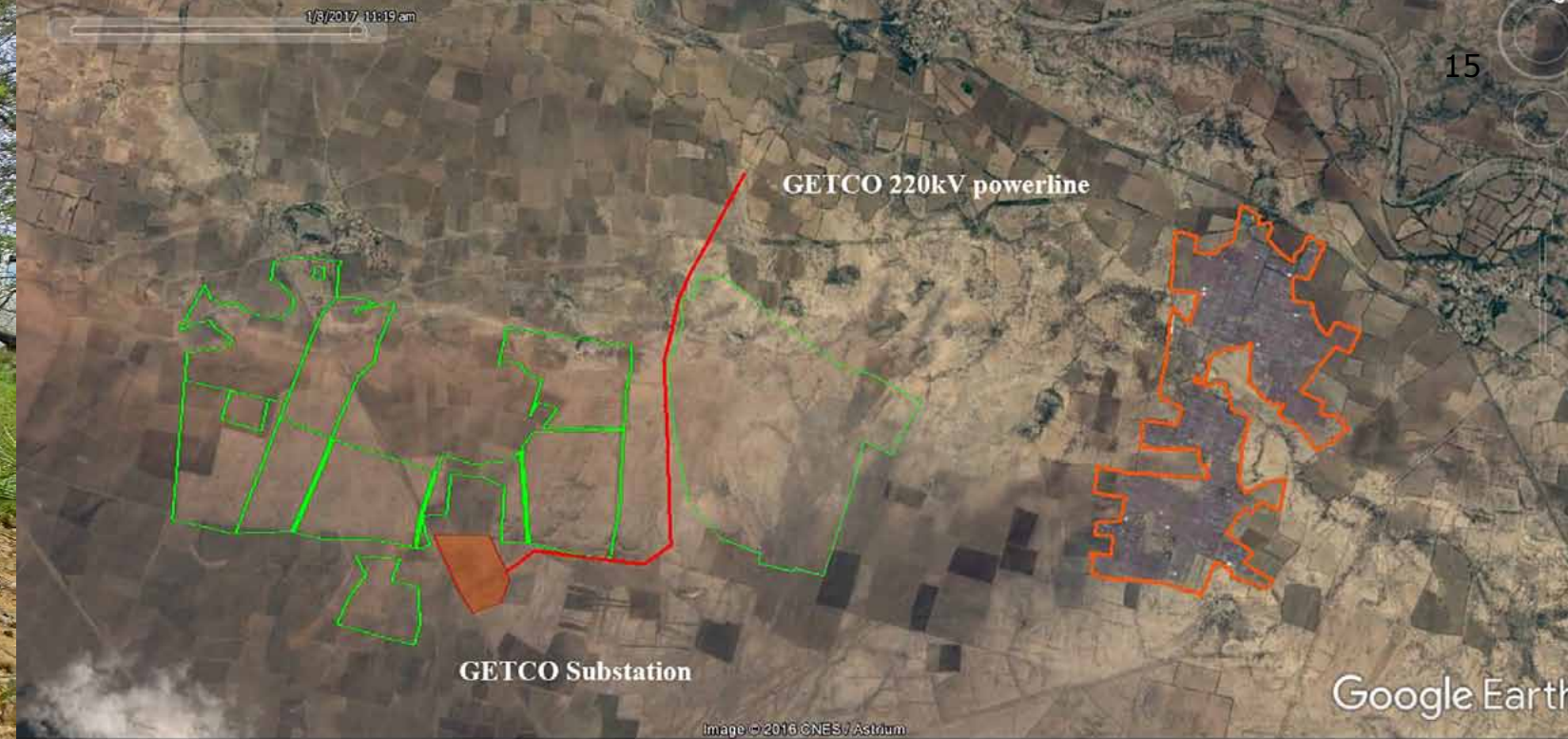
Unfortunately, in Abdasa taluka which is the last home for the GIBs in Gujarat, a huge electric power substation is being developed by the GETCO (Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation LTD), right in the middle of the most important flying area of the species. Major work of this development has already been initiated in the area. This substation is being developed in an area from where regular movements of the species have been observed. Currently, the pylons for the two high tension power lines of 220KV each, have been installed. Each of these lines have 13 cables at an exact height at which the GIBs fly. Hence, the mortality of GIBs due to the collision with such power lines in near future is very much certain.

After putting lots of efforts, the Gujarat Forest Department have succeeded in developing a suitable and secured habitat for the GIBs in this area. Even today, good growth of grass and suitable habitat for GIB, developed by Forest Department, can be seen in this area.

To provide a suitable and undisturbed breeding ground to the species, the Forest

Department has also installed chain-link fencing in this area and has developed safe breeding enclosures. Fortunately, as a result of such hard work, three chicks of GIBs have survived in the year 2016. But GETCO has planned its activities in a very tactful way in the same area by which they do not have to seek 'No Objection Certificate' from the Forest Department. Installation of the pylons and other developmental activities is being done by the GETCO adjacent to the forest areas, but outside its boundary. Due to such developmental method, the GIB habitats have been surrounded by the network of power lines and pylons which will ascertain the extirpation of GIB - The Pride Of Kutch.

The map shows how such developmental activities are being done around the GIB habitats, developed by the Forest Department, while the villages on both the sides viz. Bhachunda and Konathiya, have similar areas for such development. If this development would have been done in those areas it would have not been fatal to GIBs.



GIB habitats owned by Forest Department



Solar Power Plant



220kV powerline

Most of the time, our society has a belief that the nature conservationists and ecologists are always against all kinds of development. Hence, whenever they request the Hon'ble Government for any matter, they are considered as the "barriers of development" and their requests are being overlooked. While in reality, if their suggestions are sought, they will be able to suggest the mitigations and measures that need to be considered while implementing the project to leave minimum effect on the wildlife and environment of the related area. No naturalist would ever wish to make the villagers suffer and to hinder the development of any village. They just wish that where, what and how things should be implemented so that minimum disturbance is caused to the ecology.

When the large number of Flamingos, state

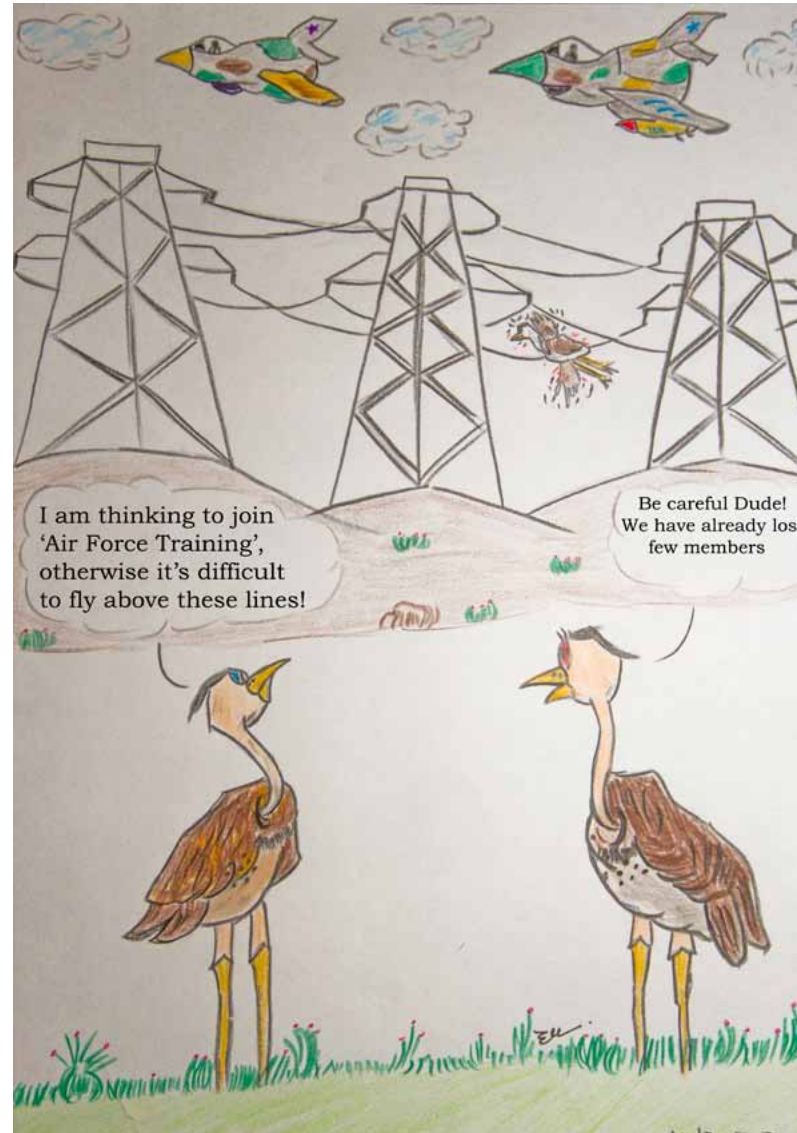
bird of Gujarat, died due to the collision with the power lines in Khadir region of Kutch, the power line was made underground which is an appreciable action taken by the Hon'ble Government and concerned officers. Currently, GIBs are facing a similar threat. Does it mean that only when these power lines will take a toll on GIBs by killing them, will the Hon'ble Government decide to take actions?

With a request to take immediate actions in this matter which can be fatal to the GIB, TCF(The Corbett Foundation) based in the Abdasa taluka of Kutch has written a letter to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat. It has also been requested that bird diverters should be installed on the power lines that has been erected, and all the future power lines in this area should be made underground.

GIB male and a powerline



© Yogendra Shah

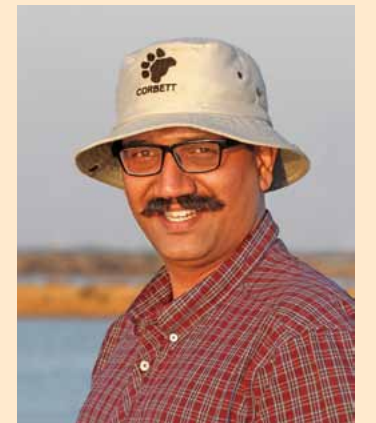


This area is the last home of the GIB in the Gujarat state, if anything happens to them due to the development of non-bustard friendly activities and if the birds die, Gujarat will lose its GIB forever.

GIB should not become a species of recent era which was allowed to get extinct when every information to save it from vanishing was available.

Devesh Gadhavi is working as a Deputy Director of The Corbett Foundation at its Kutch division. He is a member of IUCN SSC Bustard Specialist Group of the world and Bustard Conservation Committee of Gujarat state. He carries 15 years of experience in the field of wildlife conservation. He completed his Masters in Zoology and pursuing PhD in the field of wildlife science.

He has worked as a principal investigator in various research projects on bird species like Sociable Lapwing, Great Indian Bustard, Stoliczka's Bushchat, Grey Francolin, Black Francolin etc. His contribution for the conservation of Great Indian Bustard in Abdasa taluka of Kutch is inimitable. He has played a pivotal role in highlighting the ecological importance of Abdasa taluka at national as well as international level. He is also the co-author of world's first coffee-table book on the Great Indian Bustard, "A pictorial life history of Great Indian Bustard". He has also made some short documentaries and video songs about GIB and its habitat. **In addition to being a keen birdwatcher and conservationist, he is also an avid wildlife photographer. He has won Sanctuary Asia's Wildlife Photography Competition 2010 and has secured second rank in the same.**



Text & Images by Devesh Gadhavi

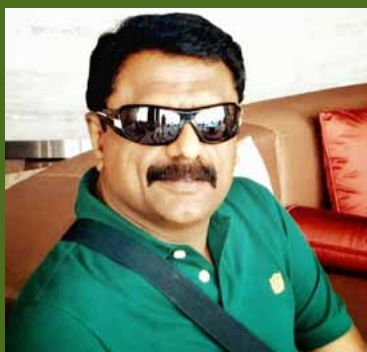


Black Panther

The Phantom Of The Forest

Praveen Siddannavar

Love at First Sight!
Dec 11 2013! A day etched in my memory forever! A dream day for a wildlifer! That was the day I had my first glimpse of this marvellous creature. It was simply a case of love at first sight. I really couldn't fathom or express my feelings clearly at that moment. Believe me, such exhilaration does happen with every cat sighting be it a tiger or a leopard. But this was an exceptional case as it was a Black Panther. The first sighting happened in Dandeli-Anshi Tiger reserve at around 5:30PM. It was a sighting of a lifetime. We visualised it hiding behind a tree trunk and peeping at us. As I set my eyes on this beauty for a moment, I forgot about the camera and was just awestruck by its majestic appearance. As I controlled my excitement, emotions and kept myself calm, I could click a few pictures and this cat too cooperated by gradually moving a bit. It came out partially in the open and then provided some excellent opportunity to make a few wonderful images. He was seen cleaning his claws, yawning, sniffing and exhibited other typical behaviours of big cats. Then we sighted a second panther in a span of 45 minutes. Was I dreaming?



Praveen is an engineer by profession and a natural history photographer by choice. He is a native of Belagavi currently settled in Bangalore. Praveen loves travelling into the wild and is particularly passionate about the tiger. With the amount of time spent studying behavioral patterns and their natural habitat, he feels that he has established a close bond with the tiger. He has extensively worked to carry out due diligence for Nagarhole Tiger Reserve and Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka state. Apart from travelling in various tiger reserves in India, Praveen has extensively travelled to Kenya and Tanzania in Africa. He is one of the very few to have captured the most endangered and elusive cats like the Jaguar in Pantanal, Brazil (South America) and the Black Panther at Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve & Nagarhole in Karnataka.

He is currently one of the founding members of Indian Wildlife Conservation Trust(IWCT), which aims to work independently towards wildlife conservation and services at the capacity of Vice President for IWCT.

An accomplished photographer & a good narrator, Praveen has won several accolades and awards in the photography world. In addition his images and photo stories have been published in leading wildlife magazines, international and national newspapers like BBC Wildlife Magazine, BBC Knowledge Magazine(Singapore, China & Taiwan), SAEVUS Wildlife Magazine, Sanctuary Asia, Smart Photography and Wildlife & Adventure Magazine. His work can be followed on his exclusive photography page - <https://www.facebook.com/PraveenSiddannavarPhotography?ref=hl>

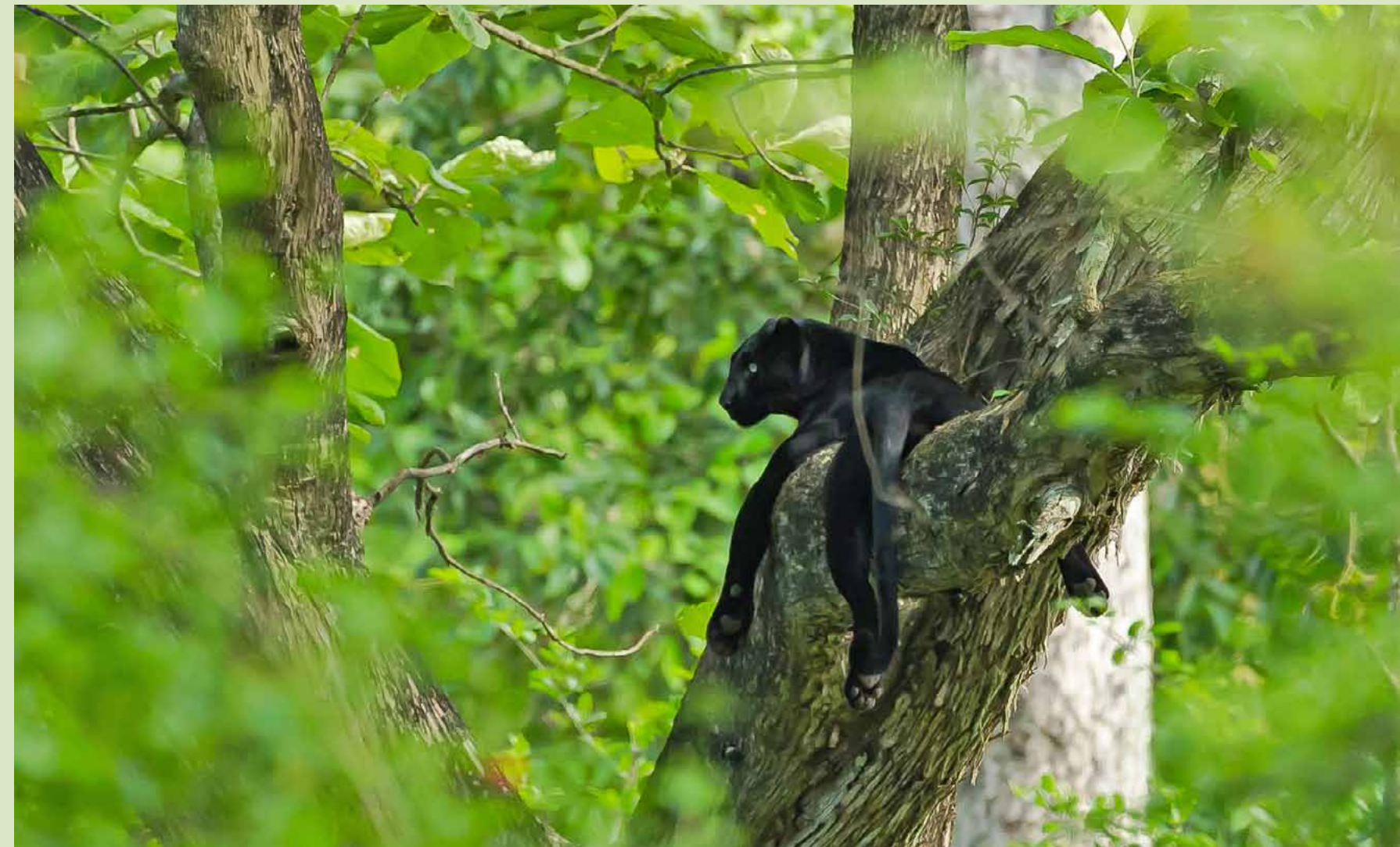
We were on the Kulgi road leading to Kulgi Nature Camp. Time was past 6:30PM, but believe me it was already pitch dark. Our driver had to use high beam lights for better vision of the road and also to care for animals' safety that cross the road after dusk. As we drove approximately 1-2 kms from Phansoli gate, our driver was very cautious and was driving at 20 km/hr and suddenly something crossed our way in a flash, it looked like a black ghost. Was it another black panther? The first sighting of black panther had made such an impact that all what we spotted was looking like a black panther; this is quite natural with wildlife lovers.

Yes! It was a black panther, which ran across the road and hid behind a tree. By now our driver knew what was expected of him. He stopped the vehicle and put off the engine with lights on. But we had to manoeuvre our vehicle a bit to reconfirm if it was really the black beauty. I can still feel my thudding heart beat and heavy breathing. Finally when I had

a clear view of this black beauty taking cover behind a tree trunk, I fired my first shot using jeep head lights as primary source of light and it worked. It peeped through a gap between the tree trunk and a twig, typically exhibiting a shy behaviour and I was fortunate to get atleast one eye in perfect focus.

I believe the true beauty of these cats clearly lies during night, they are God's most beautiful creations that wander at night and attract attention even in pitch dark conditions, with their eyes glittering like gold.

I was so ecstatic, I was not even sure what was going in my mind and whom to share this news with. Oh boy! There were thousands who would be thrilled to hear the news of this sighting. Alas! There was no network to send any text messages, nor make calls. We got what we never expected, made some amazing images and left the cat in peace and headed to our camp to celebrate.





Many of us have mistaken black panther as a species of its own. Fact is, it is not a separate species, but rather a big cat with a gene that produces a dark pigment. Melanistic leopards are commonly called black panthers. These are also known as black leopards and the term also applies to melanistic jaguars.

Black panthers exist in India, Central Asia, Africa and China, while the black jaguars are found only in South America. In short, most black panthers are either leopards or jaguars that have a condition known as "melanism".

Black panthers are found in the dense tropical rainforests where the sunlight is low. The dark coloration acts as a better camouflage in low sunlight conditions of the forest floor. These cats normally hunt on chital, black-naped hare, langurs, and mouse deers.

The density of these black leopards are by far highest in Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve in Karnataka and according to a survey carried out, there have been over a 100 photo captures of these cats using the camera traps.

Because of their distinctive looks and rarity there is always a buzz amongst the nature lovers and wildlife photographers too. Dandeli of course provides high probability to spot these black panthers and I have been fortunate to spot them on 4 occasions and on 2 occasions I managed to capture a few decent photographs.

But the million dollar question in all our minds is - Why is it hard to spot these cats? Due to their distinctive looks and dark pigmentation I believe the cats themselves feel their appearance is unusual and once they move in the open they stand out easily. However, for past two years, Kabini, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in Karnataka has been an exception.

The Kabini tourism zone has been the favourite hotspot to have a glimpse of this rare creation of nature.

It's still a mystery that how, when and from where this cat ventured into Nagarhole. There is a strong belief that it may possibly have moved from Wayanad, Kerala region. Fortunately, I got lucky to spot this amazing cat at Kabini on 3 occasions. The icing on the cake is that it is a huge healthy male.

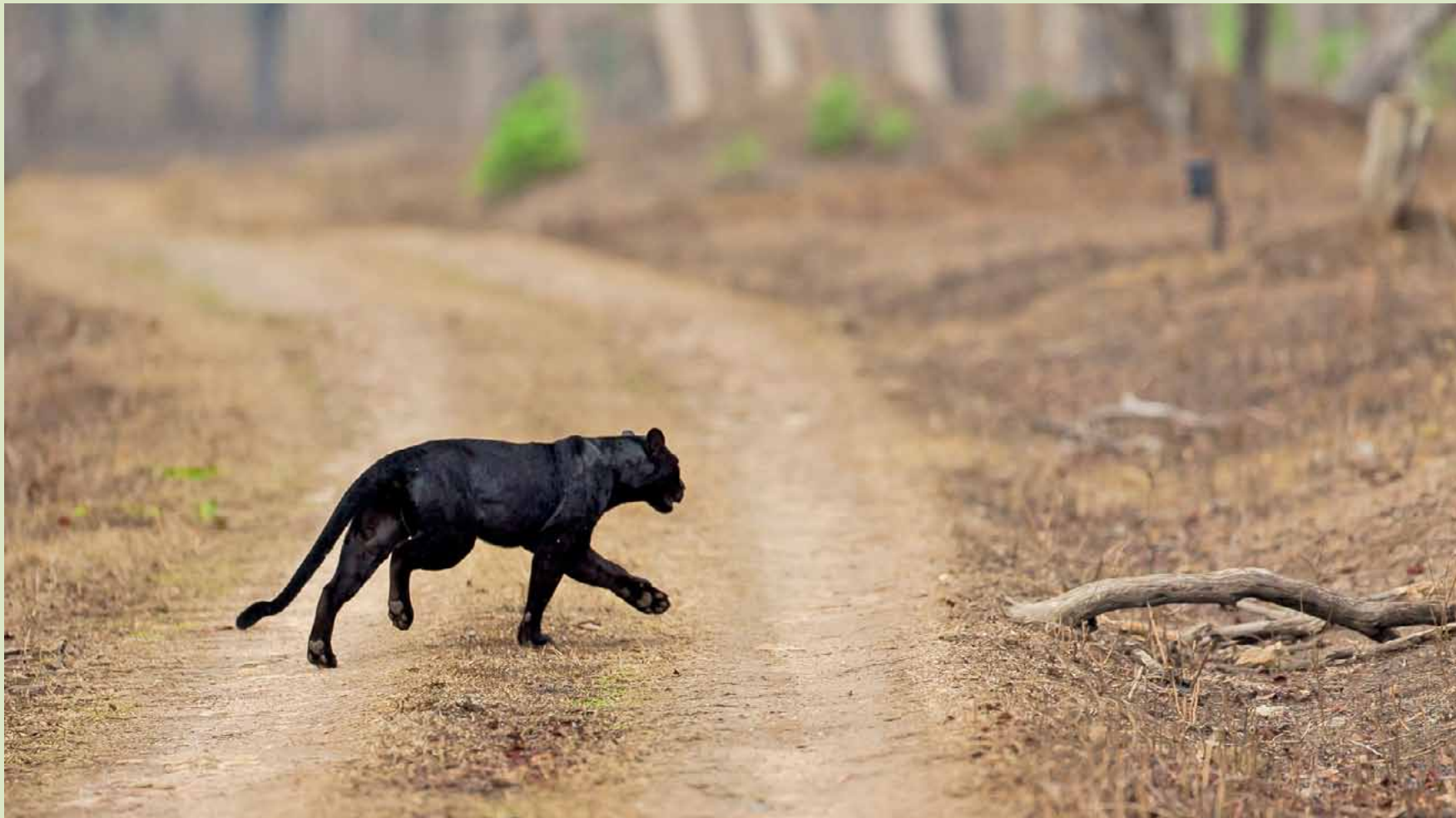
Close examination of the colour of the black panthers will show that the typical markings known as rosettes or spots are still present, but are hidden by the excess black pigment, giving an effect similar to that of printed silk. This condition is an example of 'ghost striping'. The colour variant in black panthers occurs mainly due to a recessive allele, a gene. Heritable characteristics are controlled by genes which are expressed in offsprings only when inherited from both parents. While in melanistic jaguars this occurs due to dominant allele, that is by a single dominant male.



The Ghost who walks!



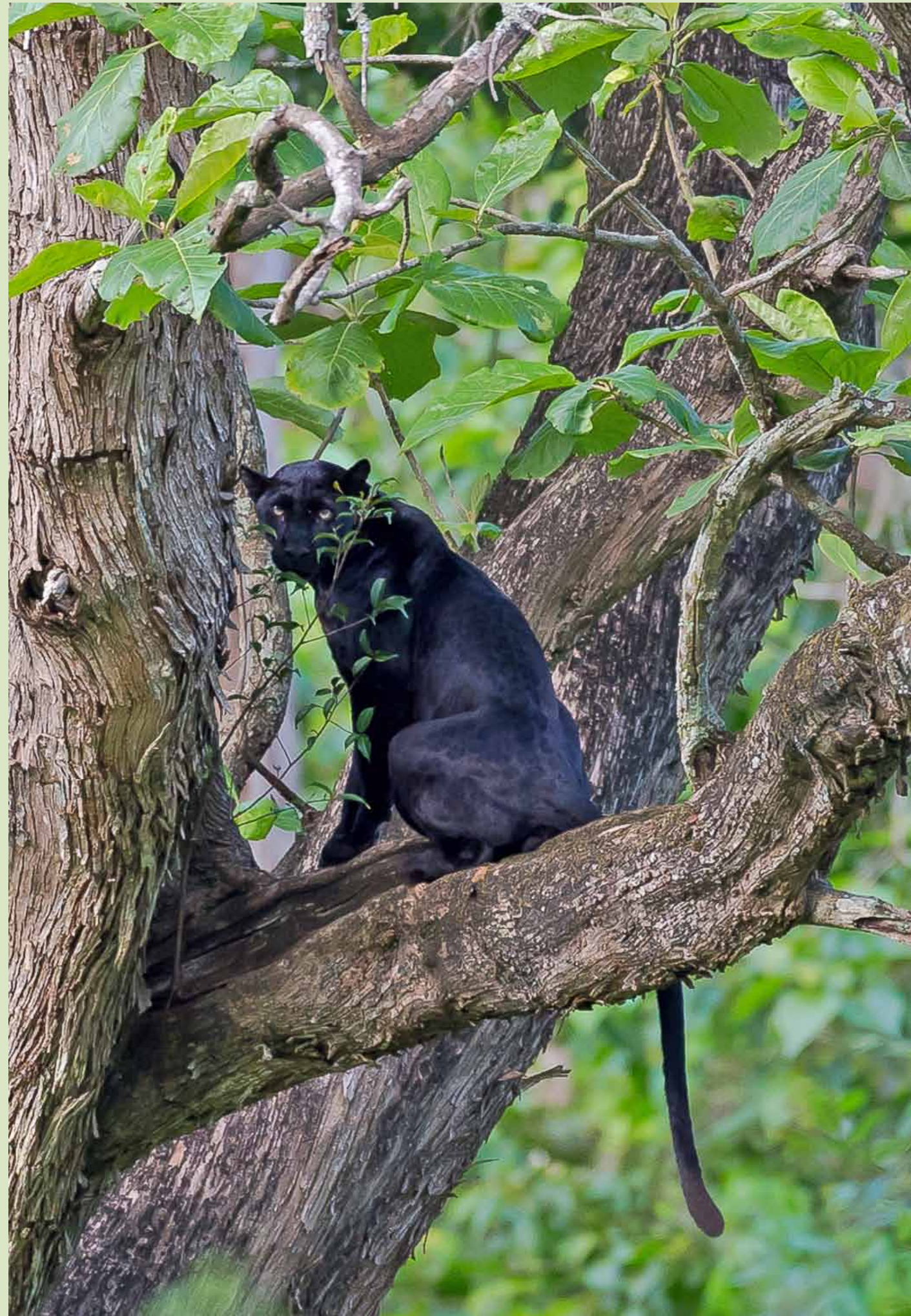
Kabini Nagarhole wildlife zone



The theory behind the melanistic cats is quite complex and researchers are still working on the reproduction cycle of melanism. Records have shown that normal male leopard courting with black leopard produce offsprings with combination of both normal spotted leopards and melanistic leopards or only black leopards, but there is no possibility of only spotted leopards being born. As mentioned, these predators prefer the dense tropical rainforest where the sunlight is low. However Kabini, Nagarhole wildlife zone is an exception, as not many areas are as dense as preferred by these cats. The male in particular, which has been in the limelight, has adapted quite well to this type of habitat and it has been spotted on several occasions especially resting on a tree. I have been lucky to spot him at Kabini, once on the ground while he was seen having a territorial fight with another male which was a spotted leopard and fortunately the black beauty won this battle and is now seen covering a large territory within the tourism zone. During this fight the black panther also had a few injuries which I was lucky to document.

Black panthers in other forests especially at Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve are extremely shy, however this cat at Kabini has got quite accustomed with humans and the safari vehicles. Black panthers also have been recorded in other tiger reserves, especially in South India, like Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary(Tamil Nadu), Anamalai Tiger Reserve(Tamil Nadu), Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary(Kerala) to name a few. Of course they have records in forests of Assam and Maharashtra too. Traditionally, the thought is that these beasts have an advantage for nocturnal hunting. However, the researchers strongly believe that it is easier for other species or a prey to spot solidly patterned animal versus one whose markings are broken up. The black panther at Kabini has recently been seen courting with a spotted leopard; sooner or later one can expect to see more offsprings in this forest. I strongly believe that this particular male is very well adapted in this forest[which has a high density of tigers] and will go a long way as an invaluable aid to wildlife research studies.

Text & Images by Praveen Siddannavar



This image is from Jhalana Forest Reserve...some small hilly forest situated at the heart of city and surrounded by Aravalli chain of mountains linking with Nahargarh Forest. The place is a perfect habitat place for the of leopards(about 15 to 18 here now) with complete food chain including Peacocks, Monkeys, Hares, Sambar, Chital and Bluebull along with various migratory birds which come here for breeding. Summer months are good for sighting leopards near water bodies as they keep coming frequently in morning and evening hours. This is some rare unexpected sighting of mother "Nathwali" along with daughter "Leela", popularly known here among local wildlife lovers. It was amazing to see both of them together for about five to seven minutes, coolly drinking water at Neem Gatta side of Jhalana Forest .

Mother and the Child



© Sudhir Garg



ANTS

The Insect Super Power

Indraneel Banerjee

Ants are one of the smallest creatures known to us; however, we generally tend to ignore this highly organized social insect. Too common and found across all continents, except Antarctica, they live in planned colonies and within their respective marked territories. The social lives of ants are one that demands a lot of observation and is a source of fascinating study for all interested.



Ants operate in a matriarchal society, the colony usually led by a single queen ant. With division of labor highly predominant, huge colonies, loyally residing under the queen consists of various ranks of wingless females in groups of workers and soldiers. The young queen has wings and mating usually occurs while flying. Post mating with multiple male partners, queen ants and male ants lose their wings and the sole purpose of the queen becomes reproduction. The male ant survives till mating is complete and dies soon after. The queen decides the sex of the offspring depending on the need of labor in the colony. The young female ants feed, clean and groom the queen ant. The workers grow the nest, dig elaborate tunnel

systems and transport new eggs into special hatching chambers. Newly hatched larvae are fed and cleaned, and pupated larvae in cocoons are protected until the young adults emerge to become workers themselves. All the ranks of workers collectively help in running the colony. The ants have a developed communication system and have the ability to solve the complex problems by working as a team. As a macro photographer, I have had the opportunity to witness the moments when the various life activities of this little insect got captured through my lens and helped me gain an insight to the otherwise unknown life of the ants.

Here are some such moments that I feel happy to share with all:



An extreme case of team bonding and support system is present during hunting and food gathering. The worker ants are expert hunters and gatherers and it is evident that strong communication among the group helps them to work as a unit and provides them the strength and capacity to kill and drag other insects that are twenty times their body weight. The orange beetle, the millipede, the green caterpillar and the white insect larva have all lost the battle of strength with the hordes of worker ants that are responsible to gather food for the queen, her brood and the entire colony. The sharp mandibles at the head form the prominent weapon of attack and kill.





However, food gathering is not an easy job, especially when competition is high. Even the male ant after mating is not spared. Seems upon receiving some sort of instruction from the queen, the males are attacked and brutally killed by the worker ants. The huge leader that forms the head of the soldier group of ants does not make a regular appearance unless the battle to win over a territory is on. Battle usually starts when one colony faces extreme food

shortage. The fight can be between colonies of same species or even other species. Often too violent a war ensures that when a colony is won over, it is celebration time. The eggs from the colony that has accepted defeat is either collected for food or taken into custody for creating a team of slave workers who are grown to do menial jobs like keeping the nest clean or taking care of the brood that is ready to hatch.



Hunting needs energy and power. One small ant is capable enough to target and kill giant insects like a grasshopper or a bee. The survival of the fittest for sure suits the occasion and it is the ant that wins the trophy in the end.





Not all ants are carnivorous. They also depend on plants for their nutrition. The studies have shown that ants are responsible for the slow destruction of the rain forests. They suck the juices of the fruits and stems to replenish their need of fluid. I was able to capture a group of them feeding on the juices of fig.

Mutual symbiosis is rampant between the aphids and the ants. The aphids produce honeydew that is consumed by the ever so hungry ants. My capture is vivid enough to prove the mutual support for survival. Both the species are found in huge numbers in the canopy of the rain forests. When an aphid or a treehopper lays eggs on a twig of a tree, the intelligent ants gather around them realizing that it is their future source of food. They build a nest around them. The aphid family feels safe as it is protected by the soldier ants. In turn, they help them with liquid nutrient that they make by sucking on the plant sap. The ant vibrates the twig on which the larvae reside. This vibration promotes excessive secretion of honeydew,



that is rich in sugar and drops of it fall down from the terminal end of the aphid's body, which is then collected by the ants. The entire process often drains the trees out of their nutrition and brings in a slow death to the plant. This is one of the main reasons why the rain forest trees are dying a slow death.





The ant may seem to be a very small creature but for sure, they are not the ones to be ignored. We have a lot to learn from them...family bonding, living in harmony and peace within one's own tribe, taking care of the newborn, unique architecture of the nests are best evidences from these

little wonders. Ants have always intrigued the scientists and biologists yet much remains unknown...unexplored!!!

As the saying goes: Hate them or love them but we sure cannot ignore them...!!!

Text & Images by Indraneel Mukherjee



My journey to the world of insect photography started since 2015 and after spending more than 1300 hours in my insect wildlife fieldwork till now, I have found that each insect species live in very distinctive habitats and have unique habits. The most exciting part in my field of wildlife that challenges me are, tracking these very small subjects, observing and understanding their languages with the anticipation of the impending activities and shooting the right moment at the right time. I prefer to capture their behavioral interactions that convey a story.

In this edition, I am happy to share some of the wonderful moments that I have come across during my wildlife photography journey.

Landscapes from the ARCTIC



Hans-Peter Deutsch

The Polar Regions are truly a dream for any avid nature photographer. These frozen regions of our planet have an immense power to ignite fertile imaginations. The raw, untouched beauty of the Arctic provides incredible photography opportunities in every season. Incredibly dramatic scenery with vast expanses covered in snow and ice can be a sight for sore eyes. The Arctic is a destination like no other, and a once in a lifetime experience to capture unique photographic moments. This series by Dr Hans-Peter Deutsch is a collection of ethereal photographs of this unforgiving wilderness, blue icebergs and glaciers. These images unfailingly concoct a pure and romantic relationship with this pristine but, remote and harsh environs.



The Giant

A giant iceberg greeting the sun on an early morning in Eastern Greenland.



Arctic Alpenglow

The rays of the low November sun touching the peaks of Otertinden in Northern Norway. Hard to say if it was still sunrise or already sunset. It all merges together. That late in the year and that far north the Sun crawls above the horizon for only an hour or so in a constant sunrise-sunset.

Fire and Ice

Some of the sunrises we had in Greenland were simply mind blowing. It was just a matter of getting up early to be ready at the right time and the right place. Well... actually only the right time would be enough, the place is basically right wherever you are in Greenland anyway.



Good Morning Greenland!

A beautiful iceberg gleaming in the early morning sun in Greenland. This area is called Bear Islands because of the polar bears often seen here. Luckily (or not ?!) we didn't encounter any.



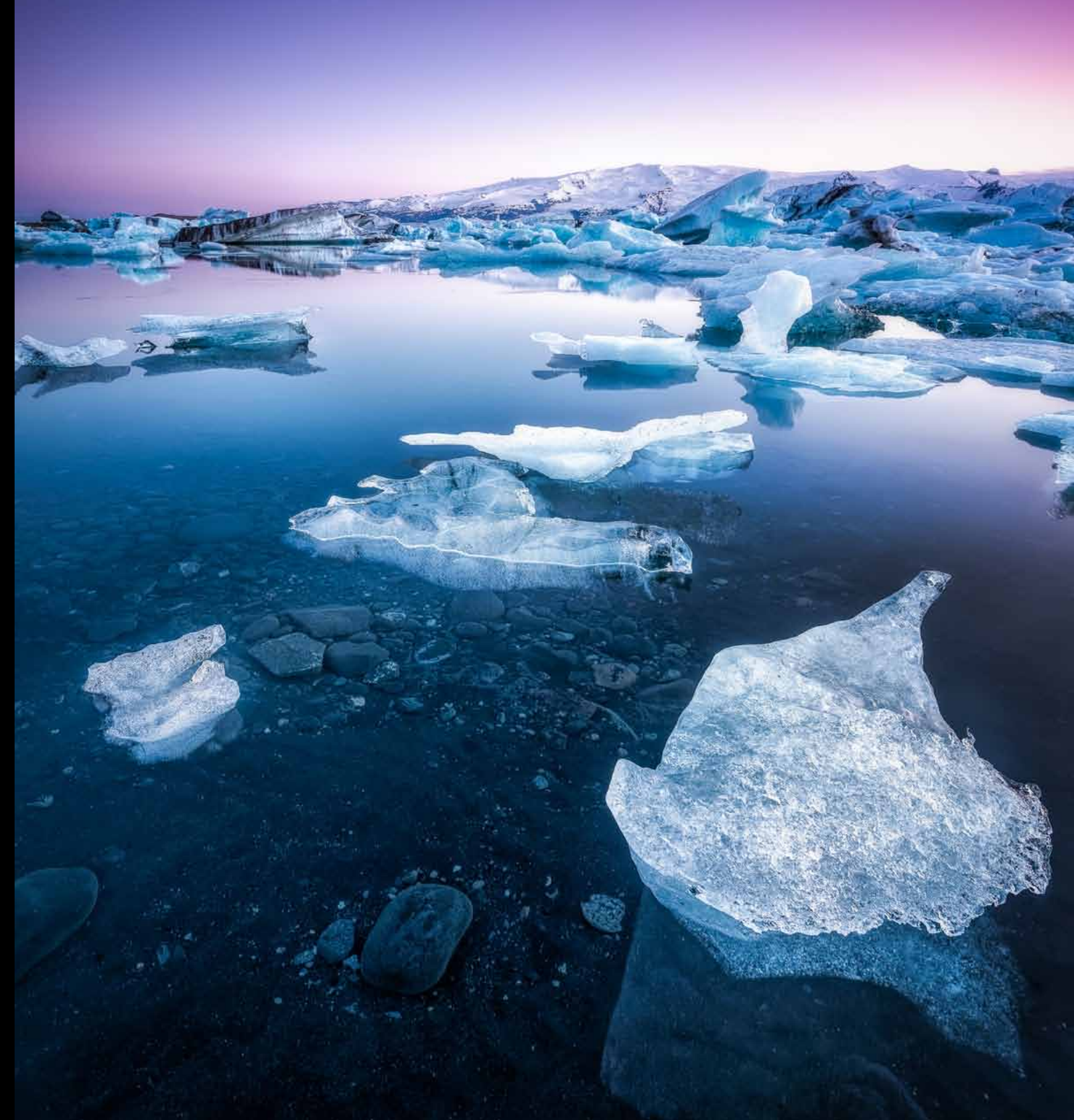


Getting Close

See the small boat on the left? We spent a whole week on this small boat with 12 people, cruising along the east coast of Greenland in total wilderness and far away from any signs of civilization. All that effort to get images like this. Kudos to the captain and the crew who really knew how to handle their boat and got us closer to the action than you would ever get on a normal cruise ship. Thus, I came home with spectacular images you normally simply can not shoot. Like this one, shot from our zodiac when getting awfully close to the iceberg, already within the area of ice chips breaking away from the iceberg all the time.

Serenity

One of the very few summer nights with clear skies in Iceland. The sun has vanished behind the horizon for two or three hours already, but it's never really getting dark. Everything is very still and the water in Jokulsarlon Glacier Lagoon shows how clear it really is (the stones in the foreground are all under water). Even the icebergs refrain from moving. A moment of purest tranquility like you can only experience in the Arctic.



Lofoten Burning Sky

Lofoten are such magical islands, especially in winter. Sometimes they provide it all: Hours of magical light in the constant sunrise/sunset, dramatic clouds in the sky, water just at the brink of freezing over but still liquid enough to reflect the amazing mountains, and... in this case even a petrified footprint of bigfoot as foreground.



Midsummer in Iceland. We didn't have the best conditions most of the time. But there was this one night when the sunset was just crazy. And we happened to be just at the right place at that time: Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon. Not only did we have this amazing sunset, but also there was this fantastic cloud formation, lit up in pink and orange by the low Sun, those illuminated clouds reflected perfectly in the still water of the lagoon, and some of the icebergs lit up like burning crystals. That you are so totally at the right place at the right time doesn't happen very often. Maybe only once in a lifetime.

15 Seconds at Jökulsárlón

A long exposure attempt to catch the sunset at Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon. The clouds arranged themselves to provide the perfect leading lines - complete with their own reflections in the smooth water. Couldn't have asked for more. You need quite a strong ND filter to get a 15 seconds exposure straight into the sun.



The Aliens Have Arrived

Bizarre iceberg glowing in the morning sun at the black beach of Jökulsárlón, Iceland. It almost looks like a crash-landed alien space ship.



Lofoten Aurora Special

Many nights on my last trip to Lofoten I stayed awake waiting for the Northern Lights. Sometimes I was rewarded for my efforts. Like this time at one of the lesser known northern beaches. Not only did the Aurora show her famous green stripes but also a faint pink haze as you can see on the right. In addition, the clouds were illuminated in yellow and orange by the city lights of far away Leknes. For some that is light pollution. Not for me, I consider the illuminated clouds an important element of the composition. Everything together made the sky light up in an almost otherworldly display of colors.

Abominable weather in the middle of the night at the black beach of Jökulsárlón, Iceland. Actually the best time to photograph the icebergs, if you can handle the rain drops on your lens.



We were already on the way back from one of the Northern Lofoten beaches with not much luck during the night yet... and suddenly the Aurora lit up like crazy over Storfjorden! One of the wildest displays I have ever witnessed. Check the EXIF data: 15 seconds at ISO 500 and f/3.5! It was so bright, we didn't need high ISOs. I even dared to try a vertical panorama since I not only wanted the sky and the mountains but also the reflections in the water right down to the seaweed at my feet. So here is the result: Full Aurora Panorama, seaweed included.

I am an early 1960s model, slowly getting a bit old, but lucky enough to have a loving wife and two great kids, grown up and out in the world by now. I love the truth. I can see beauty in it. That's why I studied Physics, even have a PhD in Theoretical Physics and published more than 20 research papers. The truth is hard to come by. And the deeper it goes the harder it gets. But the enlightenment you feel when you understand a bit more of that truth! Oh, what bliss! Better than Yoga. Which I do, too. To keep the body healthy. On a quite professional level even, having all the advanced degrees to teach it. So: Family for the heart, Physics for the soul and yoga for the body.

But what about money, if you ask? After all, you have to eat, right? Well, to make money I went where the money is: The financial services industry. I thought, why not gather a few top tier scientists and let them loose onto the financial world? Physics is much harder than finance, so if they are used to science they should excel in finance quite easily. It worked. And it grew into one of the largest consulting firms in Europe for this kind of stuff. I even wrote a book about Mathematical Finance and became a guest professor in Oxford. So: Family for the heart, physics for the soul, yoga for the body, finance for the money. And... photography.

Photography is the outlet for my creative steam. For more than 30 years (with long stretched interruptions) I am trying to make images, as opposed to just 'taking shots'. Ansel Adams spoke straight from my heart when he said exactly that in his famous quote. But things have evolved quite substantially since then. What we could do in the darkroom in the old days seem like very limited fumbling in the dark (quite literally!) compared

to what is now possible in scope as well as in precision.

So here is how I think of making pictures: When I go out with my camera I am not making pictures yet, I am only collecting data. That is just the first (and shortest) step in a long process(ing) involving advanced information technology to finally arrive at something you might call an image. Going along these lines, I have arrived at some images which I found worthy to show here.

Dr. Hans-Peter Deutsch

www.hpd-fotografy.com

www.linkedin.com/in/hanspeterdeutsch

Text & Images by Hans Peter Deusch

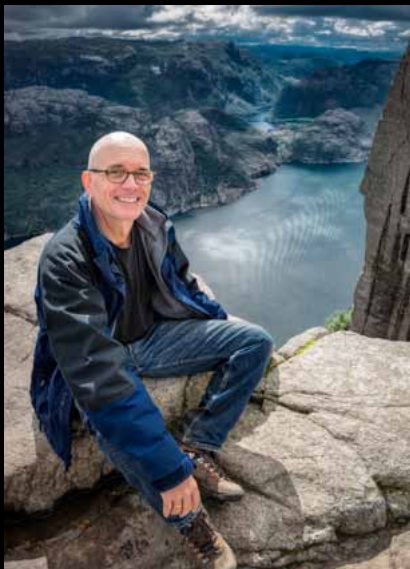


Image Of The Month - April



Baikal Teal taking off!

Swarnendu Biswas

IUCN Redlist Of Threatened Species

An Incomparable Tool For Conservation

Conserve Or Perish



Indian or Long-billed Vulture
Status: Critically Endangered

© Santosh Gujar

The IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species has been guiding conservation by collating and providing data about wildlife and ecosystems since almost 50 years. Here we have tried to have a look at the impact created on few select endangered species across the Indian Subcontinent. A cross section of all types of threatened species has been chosen randomly to visualise how the IUCN Red List is influencing threat assessment and conservation measures in our country.

Megh Roy Choudhury

The introduction in 1964 of a scientifically rigorous approach to determine risks of extinction that is applicable to all species, has today become a world standard.

The IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. The main purpose of the IUCN Red List is to catalogue and highlight those plants and animals that are facing a higher risk of global extinction(i.e. those listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable). The species which are moving towards high risk areas are classified as Near Threatened, while a good healthy population is termed as Least Concern. Considering the colossal number of species existing on the earth, the assessment is ongoing and many species will still be seen listed as Data Deficient.

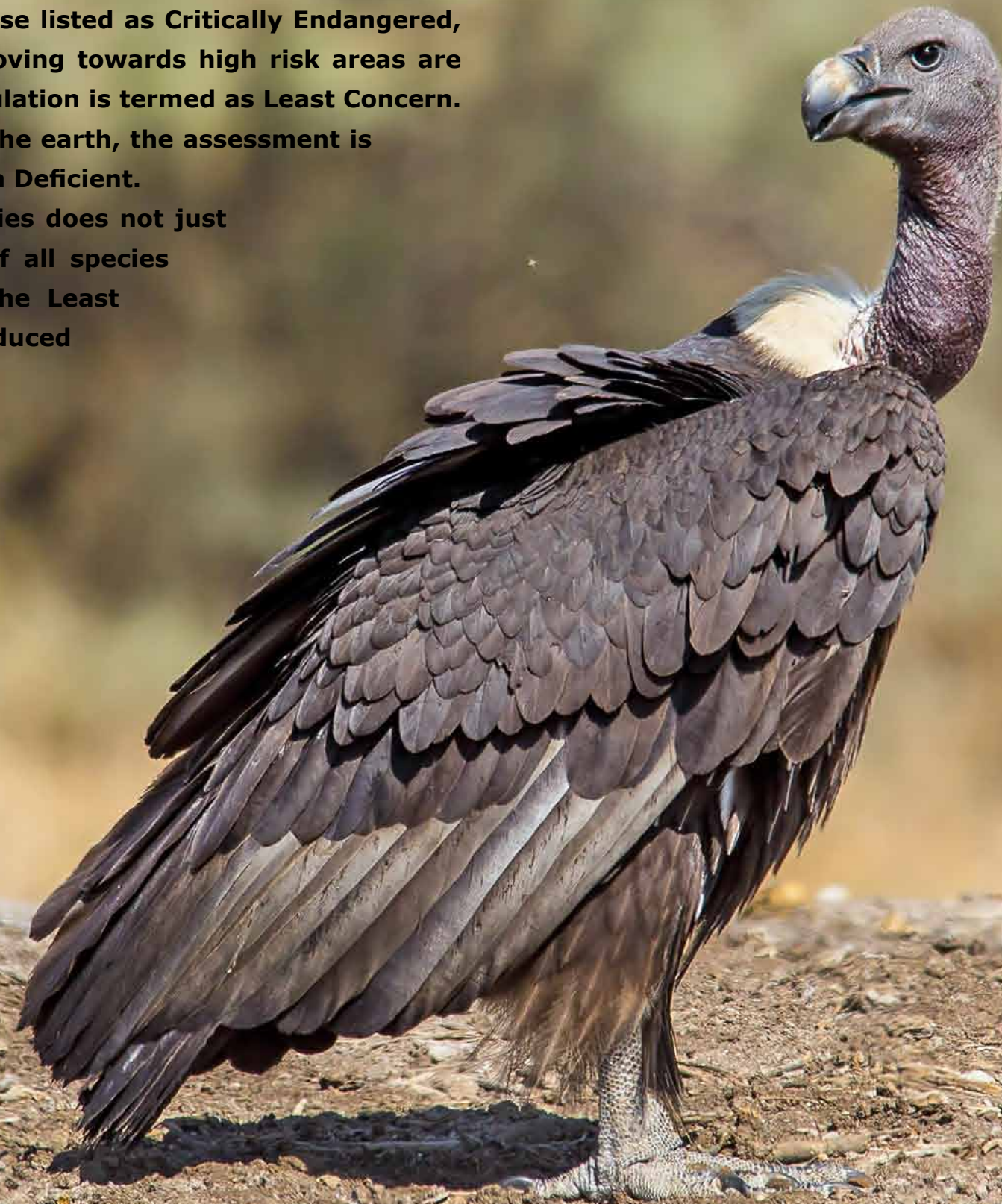
Despite its title, The IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species does not just focus on threatened species; it considers the status of all species across an increasing number of taxonomic groups. The Least Concern category which was not there earlier, was introduced in 2003.

All species are methodically covered under the following sections. Taxonomy, assessment information, geographic range, size of the population, habit and ecology, threats and finally conservation actions.

The last includes the conservation efforts already underway and the proposed actions.

White-rumped Vulture
Status: Critically Endangered

© Pranav Joshi



Great Indian Bustard

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)

This species is listed as Critically Endangered because it has an extremely small population that has undergone an extremely rapid decline owing to a multitude of threats including habitat loss and degradation, hunting and direct disturbance. It now requires an urgent acceleration in targeted conservation actions in order to prevent it from becoming functionally extinct within a few decades.

Range Description: The species occurs in the Indian subcontinent, with former strongholds in the Thar Desert in the north-west and the Deccan tableland of the peninsula. It has been extirpated from 90% of its former range and is now principally confined to Rajasthan. The population is placed in the band 50-249 mature individuals.

Threats: The current threats are mostly from habitat loss and degradation, caused by, 1) widespread agricultural expansion and mechanization of farming, 2) infrastructural development such as irrigation, roads, electricity pylons, wind turbines and constructions, 3) mining and industrialization, 4) well intended but ill-informed habitat management, and 5) lack of community support.

Conservation actions: In India it is legally protected and there are severe penalties for killing an individual. Protected areas have been specifically established for the species. Rehabilitation of grasslands has benefited the species in some areas. Grassland restoration through tree removal has taken place at the GIB Sanctuary in Maharashtra. 'Project GIB' has recently been launched in Rajasthan including constructing enclosures for the species and developing infrastructure to reduce human pressure on habitats. Other works planned include developing community awareness and an anti-poaching squad at the Desert National Park Sanctuary, Rajasthan, developing a community conservation strategy for the species and assessing the threat posed by power lines and wind turbines in the Thar Desert (Anon. 2015). The Thar Desert, Rajasthan, supports the largest population of the species and a long-term community-based, landscape-scale programme of conservation action is urgently required.

Sociable Lapwing



© Falguna Shah

Sociable Lapwing (*Vanellus gregarius*)

This species is listed as Critically Endangered because its population has undergone a very rapid reduction, for reasons that are poorly understood but are likely to be at least partly due to hunting along the migration flyway; this decline is projected to continue and increase in the future.

Range: The species breeds in northern and central Kazakhstan and south-central Russia, western China, dispersing through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Egypt, to key wintering sites in Sudan, Pakistan and north-west India.

Threats: On the breeding grounds, it was probably formerly threatened by the conversion of steppe to arable cultivation, but illegal hunting during migration and on the wintering grounds may now be the primary threat.

Conservation actions: Prevention of destruction of habitat in the designated areas and monitoring with prevention of poaching.

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*)

Gharial is listed as Critically Endangered as there has been a 96-98% population

decline and the once widespread population has been reduced to a very small number of widely spaced subpopulations. The Chambal River by far holds the largest breeding subpopulation. The only other large breeding population of gharial in India is in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary where 20 nests were found in 2006. The one other known breeding population in India is the

Son River Sanctuary.

Range: Today three widely separated breeding subpopulations are left in India (Chambal River, Girwa River and Son River) and one in Nepal (Rapti/Narayani River).

Threats: Alteration of habitat: Throughout all of the present range of the gharial, their rivers have been dammed, diverted for irrigation and other purposes leading to seasonal drying of once perennial rivers. Fishing: Intensity of fishing is increasing and use of gill nets

is rapidly killing many of the scarce adults as well as many subadults. This danger is prevalent throughout most of the present gharial habitat, even the protected areas. Agriculture, grazing, killing of gharials for ghara (narial excrescence in adult male gharial), penis and fat for medicines, and consumption of gharial are the other threats.

Conservation Actions: Conservation programs for Indian gharial have been undertaken in India and Nepal, based on the establishment of protected areas and restocking these with animals born in captivity. However this strategy has not been successful and the entire reintroduction strategy needs to be reassessed. Scarce conservation funds and human resources need to be also focused on as well as other rigorous actions such as habitat assessment, fisheries enhancement and conflict mitigation, educating river people concerning conservation efforts in order to improve the survival odds of the gharial.

Gharial



© Tanmoy Ghosh



©Tanmoy Ghosh

Amphibians:

Many new species of amphibians continue to be discovered from all parts of the subcontinent. Most of these are found to be highly localised in their known range and are under severe threat of extinction. Conservation measures for these jewels are understandably very far and few. We are covering a few species in this category.



Amboli Tiger Toad (*Xanthophryne tigerina*)

Listed as Critically Endangered because its area of occupancy is estimated to be less than 10 km², its extent of occurrence less than 100 km², all individuals are in a single location, and there is a continuing decline in the extent and quality of its habitat and in the number of mature individuals.

Range: This species is known only from the type locality, Amboli, a hill station in Maharashtra, in the Western Ghats of India.

Threats: The area where this species occurs is very close to human habitation and is experiencing loss of forest cover and its habitat. Other major threats to this species are large-scale agricultural activities and tourism.

Conservation Actions: No conservation actions are currently known for this species, and it is not known to occur in any protected areas. However, due to intense local awareness activities by wildlife enthusiasts, the population is very well stabilised and might be even thriving, according to Mr Hemant Ogale, a noted environmentalist, who resides in Amboli.

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



Kottigehara Dancing Frog/Kottigehara Torrent Frog

Kottigehara Dancing Frog/Kottigehara Torrent Frog
(*Micrixalus kottigeharensis*)

Listed as Critically Endangered because its area of occupancy is probably less than 100 km², its distribution is severely fragmented,

and there is continuing decline in the extent and quality of its habitat.

Range: This species is known only from the type locality "Kottigehara, Kadur", and from a recently discovered population at Bhadra, Chikmagalur district, Karnataka, in the Western Ghats of India. It appears to have a very small distribution.

Threats: The major threat to the species is general habitat loss as a result of agriculture, including paddy fields and cash crops such as coconut and cashew.

Conservation Actions: It is not known whether or not this species occurs in any protected areas. Further survey work is required to determine the current population status of the species and the limits of its distribution range. It is protected by national legislation.

© Sunil Sachi



Kottigehara Dancing Frog/Kottigehara Torrent Frog



Ponmudi Bush Frog

Ponmudi Bush Frog
(*Raorchestes ponmudi*)

Listed as Critically Endangered because its extent of occurrence is less than 100 km², all individuals are in a single location, and there is continuing decline in the extent and quality of some of its habitat.

Range: This species is known only from the type locality at 1,000 msl on Ponmudi Hill, part of the Agasthyamalai Hill range (Ashambu Hills) in the Western Ghats of India. It might possibly occur more widely in Wayanad district.

Threats: The habitat of this species is known to be declining due to the expansion of surrounding tea plantations, which is causing a rapid forest loss.

Conservation Actions: It might be present in Shenduruny Sanctuary and

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Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. Strengthening the existing protected areas network and maintenance of remaining habitat in the range of the species are recommended conservation actions.

© Sunil Sachi



Ponmudi Bush Frog

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

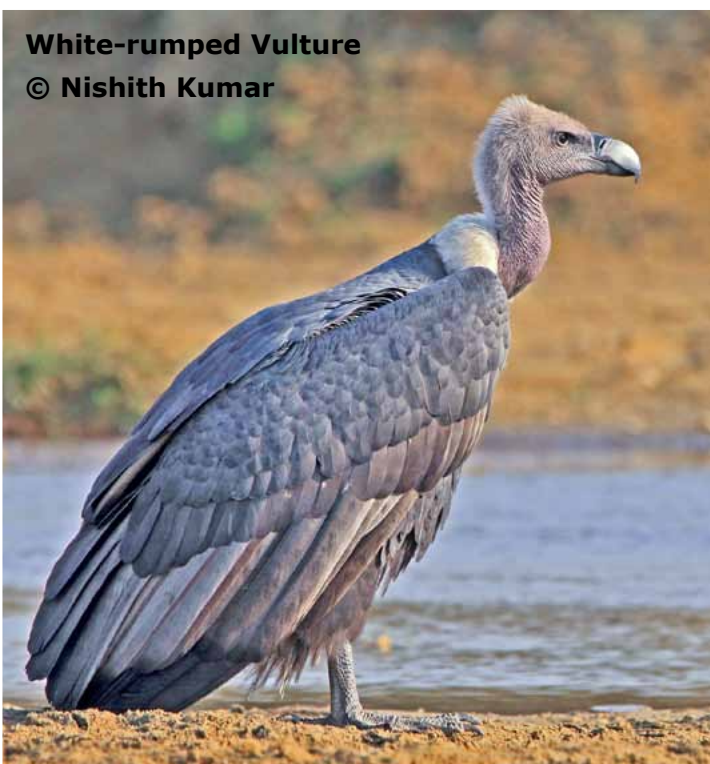
The Great Indian Vulture Crisis

Scientists have estimated that as recently as the early 1990's, there were at least thirty million vultures in India and Pakistan. They used to fly in flocks so massive, only rough approximations of their numbers could be made. Within a matter of a few years, their numbers started to decline faster than any other avian collapse in history. Many species are in Critically Endangered list and if we don't wake up in time, they are sure to follow the Dodo. Vultures play a key role in the wider landscape as providers of ecosystem services, and were previously heavily relied upon to help dispose of animal and human remains in India. There is a dire need for their conservation to maintain a robust ecological balance.

Since the mid 1990s, vultures have suffered a catastrophic decline(over 99%) across the Indian subcontinent, to the point where the species is highly threatened with extinction. Extensive research has identified the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) "Diclofenac", to be the cause behind this rapid population collapse. This drug, used to treat domestic livestock, is ingested by vultures feeding on their carcasses leading to renal failure and causing visceral gout. The four species in India which come under this category are, Red-headed Vulture, White-rumped Vulture, Slender-billed Vulture and Indian Vulture.



Red-headed Vulture
© Megh Roy Choudhury



White-rumped Vulture
© Nishith Kumar



Slender-billed vulture
© Imon Abedin



Indian Vulture
© Sudhir Gaikwad Inamdar



Indian Vulture
© Prakhar Krishnan



Griffon Vulture with White-rumped & Indian Vultures
© Nelson George

The Great Indian Vulture Crisis



Conservation actions: The governments of India, Nepal and Pakistan passed a legislation in 2006 banning the manufacture and importation of Diclofenac as a veterinary drug, with India passing a further legislation in 2008 banning the manufacture, sale, distribution or use of veterinary Diclofenac and ordered a crackdown on companies selling the same. However, levels of Diclofenac contamination still remain high and human forms of the drug are still sold for veterinary use. Proposed actions include, identify the location and number of remaining individuals and identify action required to prevent extinction. To continue to measure the frequency of Diclofenac-treated carcasses available to vultures. To support the ban on the veterinary use of Diclofenac, and support species management or restoration, as needed. To initiate public awareness and public support programmes. To monitor remaining populations and provide supplementary food sources where necessary for food-limited populations in South East Asia. Support captive breeding efforts at a number of separate centres with the aim of holding at least 150 pairs of each species in captivity and manage genetic stock in the captive-bred population. Finally and most significantly, promote the immediate adoption of Meloxicam as an alternative to Diclofenac.

Red-headed Vulture

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*)

Red Panda is listed as Endangered because its population has plausibly declined by 50% over the last three generations (estimated at 18 years), and this decline is projected to continue, and probably intensify in the next three generations. Red panda populations are suspected to be declining much faster, reflecting a battery of direct threats, this species' fragmented present range, and poor survival in fragmented areas.

Range: In the subcontinent it is found in the states of Sikkim, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh.

Threats: Red panda diet is 98% bamboo. These plants show mass flowering followed by die off. Red pandas will not readily find new feeding grounds in a highly fragmented landscape and are exposed to other threats when crossing unsuitable habitat. These bamboos do not easily re-establish after flowering in areas of environmental degradation and deforestation, which are

now widespread across the species' range. Red pandas are highly susceptible to canine distemper (even developing the disease after vaccination with domestic dog vaccine), which is lethal to them. Red pandas have specific habitat requirements for forest type, altitude, slope gradient and aspect, proximity to water courses, precipitation and presence of tree stumps. The gentle slopes and rich bamboo understorey of red panda habitat make it also a prime choice for herders with their dogs. Cattle also prefer these more gentle slopes, so trample bamboo, which is also collected extensively by herdsmen and used for fodder. In addition, tree stumps are often collected by local villagers for firewood. Hunting for trade seems to be increasing.

Deforestation and road building are easing access to red panda habitat. There are reports of poachers capturing red pandas



© Megh Roy Choudhury

in Nepal and Myanmar to satisfy the Chinese demand for the species (as wild meat, for medicine and for skins). The human population in the Eastern Himalayas is growing at a steady rate. With this growth more people are moving into red panda habitat for their livelihoods, thereby exacerbating the above threats. Tourism is one of the very important recently perceived threats to red panda habitat.

Conservation Actions: The red panda is covered under CITES Appendix I, and Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972, the highest protection possible for a species in India. It is also legally protected in Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal.

There are 20 protected areas in India that have known or possible populations of this species, yet these protected areas cover only about one-third of the total potential habitat for this species. Protection of this species is more or less adequate in the protected areas of India, due more to their remoteness and difficulty of terrain, rather than actual enforcement

of laws. The following conservation strategies are recommended. Expansion and strengthening of the protected area network, prevention of illegal felling, control of jhum cultivation and overgrazing, regulation of tourism, public awareness of threatened status of this species, and enforcement of existing legal protections. The proposed creation of the Panchthar-Ilam-Taplejung Red Panda Protected Forest in Nepal would connect the tri-national Kanchenjunga Conservation Area with India's Barsey Rhododendron Garden and Singalila National Park, creating an uninterrupted stretch of protected land extending for 11,500 km². This area is critical not only to the red panda but also to other endangered species such as the Clouded Leopard and Leopard Cat, as well as an exceptionally rich avifaunal diversity. As the red panda breeds and lives well in captivity, many zoos worldwide are making sincere efforts in raising these magnificent animals. A multipronged effort in conserving the red panda can be a real success story.



© Megh Roy Choudhury



Greater Adjutant
© Mandar Bhagat

Greater Adjutant (Leptoptilos dubius)

This species has been categorised as Endangered.

Range: It is known to breed in Assam and Bihar in India. The greater adjutant population is suspected to be decreasing very rapidly, in line with levels of direct exploitation and habitat destruction, particularly lowland deforestation, felling of nest-trees, drainage, conversion, pollution and over-exploitation of wetlands. Given the species' longevity, population trends are measured over a three-generation period of 45 years and hence the impacts have been severe.

Since 1991, there have been conservation awareness programmes in Assam. In Kamrup district, Assam, a successful community conservation program ran from 2009 to 2014 and during this period there were no records of nesting trees being

cut down and the number of successful nests grew from 65 in 2010-2011 to 148 in 2013-2014. Proposed actions include, protection of nesting and feeding-sites outside protected areas and planting trees in suitable areas to aid nesting.

White-winged Wood Duck (Asarcornis scutulata)

This forest duck is listed as Endangered because it has a very small and fragmented population which is undergoing a very rapid and continuing decline as a result of the loss of and disturbance to riverine habitats.

Range: Occurs in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Manipur. Mature adults are estimated at around 450 in number. Its decline is largely attributable to the destruction, degradation and disturbance of riverine areas, e.g. wetland drainage and forest habitats that this species is dependent on, including the inappropriate management of forests, e.g. forest burning during the dry season. Hydro-power development and pollution are other more localised threats. The Wildfowl And Wetlands Trust produced and implements



White-winged Wood Duck
© Swarnendu Biswas

an action plan for the species. In 1993, 21 protected areas were known to support populations. Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Dihing-Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary, both in Assam, were established because of its importance for this species, while a significant population is in Nameri National Park. Proposed actions are to conduct further surveys to clarify its distribution and status, to instigate regular monitoring of selected key populations and to promote strict enforcement of hunting regulations and minimise encroachment, disturbance and habitat degradation in all protected areas supporting populations.

Lion-tailed Macaque (Macaca silenus)

Listed as Endangered as the total number of mature individuals is less than 2,500 with no subpopulation having more than 250 mature individuals. There are estimates of a continued decline of over 20% of the

populations in the next approximately 25 years, along with hunting and continued loss of habitat.

Range: This species is endemic to the Western Ghats hill ranges in southwestern India from the Kalakkad Hills(8°25'N) to Anshi Ghat(14°55'N) in the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Although the species has a relatively wide range, its area of occupancy is small and severely fragmented.

Threats: Habitat degradation seems to be the biggest threat to the conservation of lion-tailed macaques wherever they occur. Hunting is a second major threat.

Fortunately, many of the areas in which these primates occur are already protected areas. Additionally, there should be management of private lands, which hold perhaps a quarter of the remaining populations this would ideally include maintaining coffee and cardamom plantations where populations remain.

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



Lion-tailed Macaque
©H B Varun

Rufous-necked Hornbill



© Megh Roy Choudhury

Rufous-necked Hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*)

This large hornbill qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small, rapidly declining population as a result of destruction of evergreen forest and hunting.

Range: In India, the largest populations and greatest extent of suitable habitat are in Arunachal Pradesh and the northern(Himalayan) part of West Bengal, specifically in the Latpanchar area in Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary.

Threats: Its dependence on large trees for feeding and nesting makes it especially susceptible to deforestation and habitat degradation through logging, shifting cultivation and clearance for agriculture. These problems are compounded by widespread hunting and trapping for food, and trade in pets and casques.

Conservation: Many populations are in the protected areas. The Hornbill Nest Adoption Program has been established in India focusing on protecting the nests of rufous-

necked hornbills outside protected areas in central and western Arunachal Pradesh.

Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*)

This species is classified as Vulnerable because it has a single small population that is in decline owing to the loss and degradation of wetlands, and changing agricultural practices in both its breeding and wintering grounds. However, the population has apparently increased or stabilised in recent years.

Range: It breeds in Ladakh and is a winter visitor to Arunachal Pradesh.

Threats: Intensive grazing and pesticide use has caused degradation of grasslands in breeding grounds. A lot of shallow wetlands used by the cranes, like Lake Tsomoriri are thought to be disappearing due to permafrost degradation.

Conservation: WWF India has been taking a leading role in coordinating conservation work for black-necked cranes in India.

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



© Falguna Shah

Proposed actions include, monitoring the species and its habitat focusing on the impact from climatic and glacial changes on breeding habitats. Establishing baseline information on chemical contaminants, including heavy metals and pesticides, to assess impact of these factors on cranes.

Great Slaty Woodpecker (*Mulleripicus pulverulentus*)

This species is listed as Vulnerable as it has suffered a rapid population decline over the past 20 years(three generations) due to loss of primary forest cover throughout much of its range. However the true rate of decline may be greater than currently estimated, and evidence of such declines would result in the species being uplisted in the future.

Range: Northern India through the foothills of the Himalayas.

Threats: It is threatened only by habitat destruction. No conservation actions are in place but the species needs to be watched over very closely.



Great Slaty Woodpecker

© Eash Hoskote

Greater One-horned Rhinoceros

(*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

Though categorised as Vulnerable, the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros populations are increasing overall due to strict protection, especially in India. However, some populations are decreasing, especially in Nepal and parts of northeastern India. There is a continuing decline in the quality of habitat, projected to continue into the future, which, if not addressed will affect the long-term survival of some of the smaller populations, and could jeopardize the further recovery of the species. Its populations are also severely fragmented.

Range: Currently the Indian rhinoceros exists in a few small subpopulations in Nepal and India and over 70% of the population is in Kaziranga National Park.

Threats: Poaching, mainly for the use of the horn in traditional Chinese medicine has remained a constant threat. There is also serious declines in quality of habitat in some areas. The species is inherently at risk because over 70% of its population occurs at a single site, Kaziranga National Park and a catastrophic event there could have a devastating impact on the status of the species.

Conservation: The Indian and Nepalese governments have taken major steps towards Indian rhinoceros conservation, especially with the help of the World Wide Fund For Nature(WWF) and other non-governmental organizations. Indian rhino populations occur almost exclusively within and around protected areas. With the support of the IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group, an Indian Rhino Vision 2020 has been developed. These cover a number of important and specific conservation measures.



© Saikat Bhattacharjee

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

MacQueen's Bustard (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*)

This species is classified as Vulnerable, as globally it is estimated and projected to be in rapid population decline over three generations, starting in the past and continuing into the future. However, rates of population decline may be very rapid, and if hunting pressure is not reduced, the species could soon warrant uplisting to a higher threat category.

Range: Birds from the northern populations winter further south and in the dry arid zone of western India, mainly in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Threats: The principle threat is from hunting (primarily using Falconry), largely but not exclusively on the species' wintering grounds. Large numbers are also trapped, mainly in Pakistan and Iran, and shipped to Arabia for use in the training of Falcons. Oil exploration, road building, oil and water pipelines, mining and quarrying activities, power lines and the general disturbance caused by four-wheel drive vehicles have all been identified as significant auxiliary threats. Livestock grazing is reported to have a negative impact on the species, both indirectly by degrading the desert vegetation on which birds rely for food and concealment, and directly through the trampling of nests and disturbance to nesting females.

Conservation: All the actions mainly are concentrated in the breeding areas and in India it is a protected species.

Travancore Tortoise (*Indotestudo travancorica*)



This species is listed as Vulnerable owing to a very localised presence in Western Ghats of India.



Grey-headed Bulbul
(*Pycnonotus priocephalus*)
Near Threatened


© Dharendra Holikar

IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species is a very powerful conservation tool.

On a common platform it provides detailed data on all the documented species. It integrates data acquired from various platforms and makes it available easily for study and research. It provides information and analyses on the status, trends and threats to all species in order to inform and catalyse action for biodiversity conservation. To achieve this goal, the IUCN Red List aims at a three-pronged approach. To establish a baseline from which to monitor the change in status of species, to provide a global context for the establishment of conservation priorities at the local level, and to monitor, on a continuing basis, the status of a representative selection of species (as biodiversity indicators) that cover all the major ecosystems of the world. Current status of any species with recent trends in the size of the populations allow for assessment of the degree of threat. Conservation actions can be planned meticulously and futuristic threats can be perceived as any species goes into a Near Threatened category.

Species covered here are for the sake of elucidation only and do not include all the species in any given category.

References: A] <http://www.iucnredlist.org/> B] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IUCN_Red_List

A photograph of an ornate flying snake (Sphenomorphus ornatus) coiled around two tree branches. The snake has a dark blue-black body with intricate patterns of yellow and orange-red spots and bands. Its head is positioned in the center, looking towards the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest environment.

Ornate Flying Snake

A Reptilian Jewel

Can the Ornate Flying Snake
actually fly? Of course not.
But boy, can it glide!

Rahul Alvares



Can a snake really fly? Of course not. True powered flight is only achieved by animals with wings like insects, birds, and bats. The flying snake, like flying frogs, flying lemurs and flying squirrels, is a glider. The flying squirrel glides by stretching a fold of skin called a "patagium" connected from its wrist to its ankle. Flying frogs glide on membranes stretched in between long toes. The Ornate Flying Snake however has no such membrane or patagium to glide on. Instead it achieves a parachute like effect by extending its ribs, and pulling in its underside. A cross section of the snake taken at this time would be very similar to the cross section of a frisbee. This trick coupled with the snake vigorously 'swimming in the air' gives it enough lift and buoyancy to glide up to a hundred meters.

It must be remembered however that the snake must trade altitude for distance while gliding: the greater the difference between 'take-off' and 'landing' points the longer the distance covered on the glide! So like all experienced and educated gliders the flying snake will generally climb high up onto a tree before it launches itself into the air.

Flying snakes are rare animals and in the twenty odd years I've been handling snakes I've never

come across one. But of course it doesn't help that I don't live in flying snake territory. Deepak, a friend of mine works at the Cotigao wildlife sanctuary and often rescues snakes from human habitations around there. In the last two months I've had the good fortune to closely observe three flying snakes, thanks to him. Before I had first seen a flying snake, I could only guess at its behavior. I had no idea how this stunning and mysterious creature would react on being handled. I was surprised to learn that the flying snake shares almost the exact same temperament, movement patterns, and body structure as the Common Bronzeback Tree Snake. In fact the only obvious difference between the two snakes is in the way they are colored. My first thought on handling the flying snake therefore was wondering why the bronzeback tree snake did not also glide.

My second thought was that of astonishment at the speed and sure-footedness (pardon the pun!) with which the flying snake scaled vertical branches with seemingly no effort while I tried to photograph it. I learnt later that flying snakes have strongly keeled belly scales and it isn't uncommon to see them climbing vertical trunks of thick trees with a gravity-mocking confidence.



Flying snakes are diurnal animals and move around mostly in the trees. They are fairly catholic in their diet and feed on a range of animals including frogs, geckos, lizards, small birds, bats and even other snakes! Like Vine Snakes and Cat Snakes, flying snakes are back fanged. These enlarged rear teeth of the snake assist its mildly

venomous saliva in entering into its prey and subduing it. Very little is known about the flying snake's breeding habits except that it is oviparous and lays 6-12 elongated eggs. The ornate snake is one of the most beautiful reptiles you can wish to see and I indeed am a very lucky chap.



Rahul Alvares is an avid Wildlifer from Goa and is an expert in snakes. He conducts customised wildlife tours for bird watching and snake watching in North Goa and the Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, besides having photography workshops where he shares his knowledge of photography, breaking it down to the level of an amateur. His own photography, meanwhile, remains an avenue for adventure, giving expression to his creativity and passion for wildlife.

From Our Facebook Group

Indian Black Turtles
© Sudanshu Tiwari



Caspian Plover
© Vikramsinh Sodha



Spectacled Finch
© Aditya Chavan



Indian Eagle Owl
© Jaysukh Parekh Suman



Pramod Kumar P Laxmin

PRINCE

**A Roar Which Has
Fallen Silent**



The legendary era of "Prince Of Bandipur" has come to an end. The mortal remains of the legendary Prince was found near Lokkere in the fringes of Kundkere range of Bandipur Tiger Reserve on 2nd April 2017. A tragic day for the entire community of conservationists , wildlife enthusiasts and wildlife photographers alike.

Prince aka Kunta was a legendary tiger that ruled the tourism zone of Bandipur Tiger Reserve. His territory encompassed the major chunk of the tourism zone. Believed to have been first recorded from Hediya Range of Bandipur Tiger Reserve, he was identified BPT 222 in the logs of WTI by Dr. Ullas Karanth and the Forest Department. He was referred to as Kunta by tribals and Forest Department guards because of the limp owing to an injury to his front paw.

Prince was one of the very handsome and one of the most photographed tigers of south India. He was a dare devil "muscular hunk", who enthralled the ensemble of wildlife enthusiasts and tourists alike by his camera savvy nature, bold and nonchalant show. He occupied the territory of the legendary Agastya in early 2009, his boldness was exemplified by the show he used to put up, never was he perturbed by the presence of tourists, he always used to put up an enchanting show. Such was his fearlessness that he used to walk bang on the safari track, forcing the vehicles to pull back at times. It was late 2009, when I first encountered "Prince", we sighted him almost 500 meters away, the news of the legendary Agastya being no more was afloat, we were not very sure who this new tiger was, we stopped our vehicle and waited at a distance, not very sure the sight of us may make it scoot like many other tigers we had seen in Bandipur. Very surprisingly it walked right to our vehicle, stood its ground and we had to reverse, it walked head on almost for a kilometer and a half, that was bold! Thus began my 7 year journey of acquaintance with this legendary machismo, who was affectionately called Prince by wildlife enthusiasts

as he inherited the territory from the legendary Agastya, who was called the king of tourism zone.

The tigers of south India are seldom bold and tourist friendly unlike their counterparts of central India. A sighting usually implies, 'a glimpse' of a tiger when they sprint across the road or grab a quick sip of water on a hot summer day. Prince is a legendary big cat who changed the very definition of such a sighting, he used to comfortably dip in a pool of water for hours at times, used to get up and put up an impressive cat walk scent-marking his territory. About 4-5 years ago, on a lazy game drive on a monsoon weekend, enjoying the burst of greenery recovering from the parched brownness of an unforgiving summer, a whiff of mild spray of rain added to the mood of the evening, we stopped by to see a group of Gaurs (Indian wild cattle) grazing on the fresh sprouts of grass. There was a lone bull gaur that had wandered a few yards away from the group, our vehicle started rolling a few rolls,



Prince sprang from nowhere, from the thick green cover of lantana bush. We jammed the brakes and there was pin drop silence, only two sounds to enthrall my ears were, one my heartbeat and the other the last struggle of the bull gaur to escape the grip of the canines on its neck. I have been brought up in the vicinity of these great jungles, and my favorite past time was all those stories of my grandparents which personified the intelligence of tiger hunting in the night, many stories from Jim Corbett and Kenneth Anderson adorned my teenage hobby.

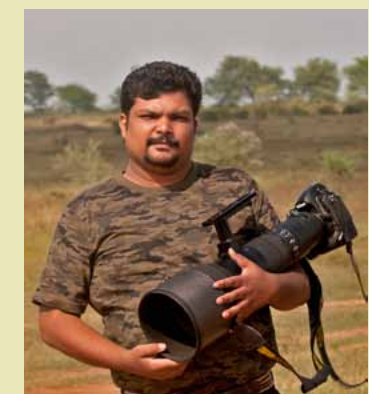
This incident shook the very myth, Prince took 20 minutes and killed a gigantic gaur in front of my eyes. I had my camera firmly held in my hand, the excitement made me forget that I had to click.

Prince was a ruler in true sense. His territory was huge and extended from fringes of Kundkere range, Mulapura extending upto Shetti Kere and Basavana Katte. He frequented the popular water holes of tourism zones like



Dayyad Katte, Ane Katte, Hulikatte, Moor Kere among hosts of others. He instilled inspiration by the way he defended his territory, defeating many young and strong tigers who challenged him. Even with an injured limb he continued to dominate his territory for years, proving everyone wrong who felt the injury (on the front paw) would mark his demise. We have had heard several instances by forest guards and tribals of him slaying powerful tigers venturing into his territory.

Prince has won the hearts of millions by his charisma, attitude and boldness. As they rightly say "once a legend always a legend", he will continue to rule the hearts and minds of every enthusiast forever. His legacy as The Legendary Tiger That Roared The Wilderness Of Bandipur will not end here.



Pramod Kumar P Laxmin is a very well known wildlife photographer from Bangalore, India and has worked extensively in Bandipur.

From Our Facebook Group



Gautam Ghosh

Gautam is from Singur, West Bengal. He clicked this beautiful raptor, a Pied Harrier, from a place near Singur, where it has been seen for the last few years. brilliantly taken, the angle of flight in this image makes it even more eye catching.



Nagaraj Chindanur

This beautiful image of Common Green Magpie was captured in Mahananda National Park in West Bengal. Nagaraj is extremely fond of capturing small birds in flight and has been doing a highly commendable job .



Ayan Guin

Ayan is a dentist hailing from West Bengal and is a very passionate wildlifer. This picturesque image of the resplendent Northern Shoveller(male) was made in Mangalajodi, Orissa.

Manas National Park

Hidden Treasure of Assam

Travelogue

Anu Marwah

Located in the Himalayan foothills, Bhabar area, in the western part of Assam, Manas was originally a Game Reserve since 1928 and became a Tiger Reserve in 1974, a World Heritage Site in 1985, a Biosphere Reserve in 1989 and finally declared as a National Park in 1990. The park is known for its rare and endangered endemic wildlife. Manas is recognized not only for its rich biodiversity, but also for its spectacular scenery and natural landscape which includes a range of forested hills, alluvial grasslands and tropical evergreen forests.





©Anu Marwah

INTRODUCTION

The tea industry is what the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam is well known for. I was born and brought up amidst the lush green estates, most of them legacies of the by-gone British era. My childhood was indeed a blessed one, for apart from luxuries of living in colonial British bungalows, the estates were also teeming with a lot of wild beings and from there started my interest in wildlife. My first ever trip to a National Park was at age 3 to Namdapha NP, I also remember seeing a black panther as a 14 years old teenager, at my dad's estate and that sight is still etched in my memory. My inquisitiveness pertaining to knowing more about Indian wilderness took me to a lot of forests in north and central India but the forests of Terai and North East were always my favourite. However, I felt sad not to have had the opportunity to explore Manas, as the Bodo Land agitation had made it out of bounds during my childhood years back in the 80-90's. I first visited Manas in 2009 with no expectations. It was, however, a rejuvenating experience. The sheer expanse of a dense forest cover, necklaced with a sparkling river and some stunning grasslands

made it a neat Corbett-Kaziranga cocktail which took me by surprise.

I remember spending days together at the Mathanguri Inspection Bungalow, staring at the deep blue waters of the Manas river and this once troubled paradise of Assam and realized this place had become another one of my favorites. I revisited Manas again in 2016.

Home to the impressive One-horned Rhinos seen against distant dramatic backdrop of the hills in Bhutan, in wooded forests and grasslands, the characteristic river beds of Manas offer interesting photographic opportunities with Wild Buffalos on the dazzling white stone riverbed - a typical Terai visual but a species not found in the Kumaon/Garhwal belt I am so familiar with. The Park derives its name from the river Manas, which also serves as an international border between the sovereign states of India and Bhutan. The tumultuous river, rushing through the Park's western end, joins the mighty Brahmaputra downstream. The forest is always teeming with wildlife and can spring up with a surprise anytime, a sudden appearance of the rare Malayan

Giant Squirrel, Yellow-throated Martens or Elephants grazing amidst the Semal trees in full bloom during the springs. A patient wait at one of the watchtowers for the rare and shy Bengal Florican feeding in the open grasslands is a Manas specialty.

On a heavily foggy morning in December, I woke up at 5AM in New Delhi, caught a flight to Guwahati. From there it is a four hours drive to Manas. Exiting Guwahati isn't an easy task, even with the new bypass road, it took us a good one hour to get out of traffic and finally hit the highway. Much had changed since I last visited in 2009, the road which used to be a single lane, was now a wide four lane highway and the drive was quite smooth and we got to Manas in no time at all. Arriving at Barpeta Road, I checked into the lodge, a small cluster of cottages and tents, run and managed by the local village community. The place was right next to the Park boundary, a five minutes walk from the main gate. I met up with the local guide and the camp manager and they immediately opened up the moment they figured I wasn't just another tourist visiting from Delhi but was born and brought up in the state and

could speak their language. Post a hearty Assamese meal of dali, bhat, aloo pitika and bhaji, I retired for the night looking forward to the next day morning and what laid in store.

The Sun rises early here in the eastern part of the country and I couldn't wait to get started. Even before we got to the gate, a young rhino grazing in the early morning light was the first welcoming sight. As the gypsy traversed the track going deeper into the forest, the sound of multitudes of birds filled the air, a startled Peafowl flew across the road, the mist laden over grown elephant grass sprayed the fresh morning dew across my face and I felt happiness and inner peace, I was after all, at home. I had been asking about Bengal floricans to my guide and he took me to one of the beat camps, which also doubled up as a watch tower. The camp/watchtower overlooks an expanse of grassland and the beat guard informed us that the floricans were around and he had seen a couple the previous evening, quite close to the camp. Armed with cameras and binoculars we climbed up and started scanning the wide open grasslands. A few



© Anu Marwah

minutes later the guide spotted one. While it was great to spot one, it wasn't photo worthy, but a lifer no doubt. We waited for it to step out into the open, and come closer at least for a record shot and that took up the entire morning. That was a morning well spent, chatting up with the forest guards and listening to their stories.

Then an Asiatic wild buffalo came by, and so did a young bull elephant, and by the end of the morning safari, the florican did step out close enough for a less than decent record shot.

The lunch at the resort was a special treat, my favorite "Massor Tenga" (tangy fish curry) and rice. It was nice of the resort manager to make Assamese food that I told him I miss being in Delhi. The afternoon safari was all about going through an alternate safari route which goes along the river and there were quite a few birds in the area. Back in 2009 there weren't many safari tracks and most of the Park was inaccessible. An elephant herd

crossed the road in a hurry, making its way to the river. Wild buffaloes lay basking in the sun on a distant riverbank, while a solitary Ruddy Shelduck flapped its wings in the shallow end. We drove to another beat camp which has a few water bodies near it and was frequented by elephants and rhinos, but none were around that evening, we waited for quite some time and then decided to head back as the sun was beginning to set. The next morning was quite eventful; the beat camp with the water hole had 3 rhinos grazing near it. The sun was just starting to rise and it cast a magical golden glow over the forest scape, the dew drops sparkled like diamonds on the blades of grass and the leaves.

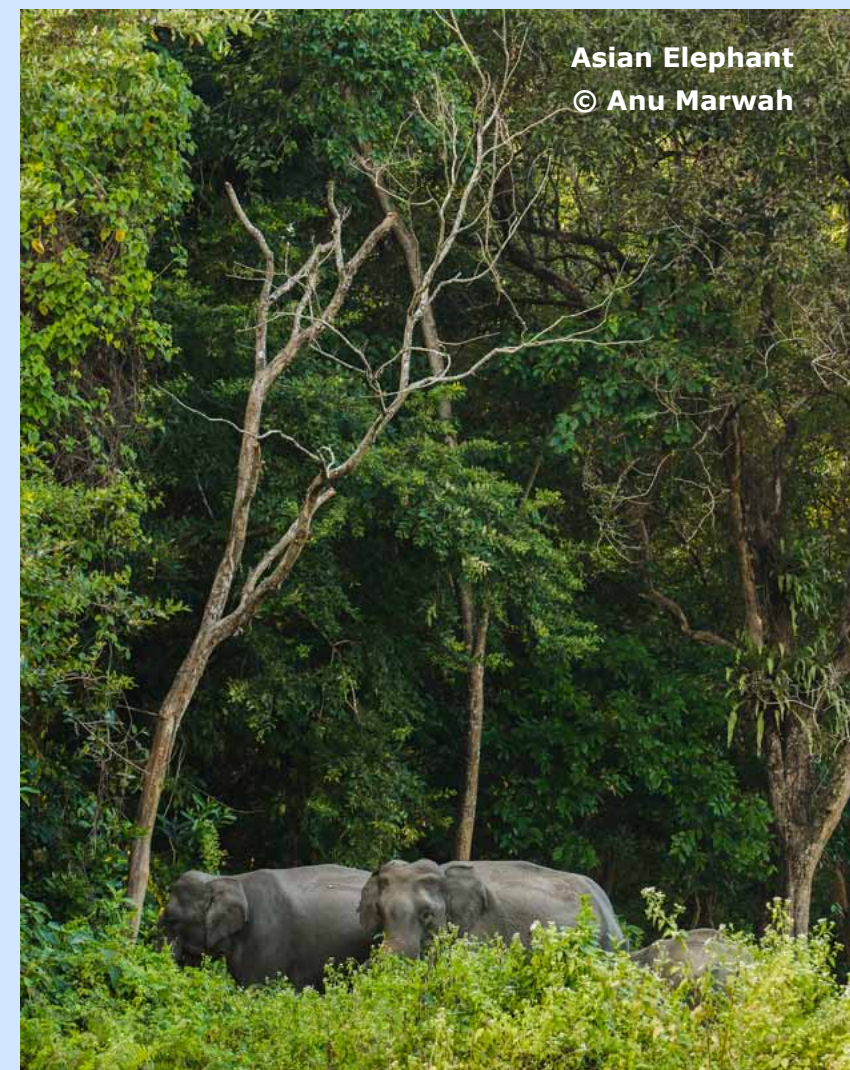
The rhinos took up the entire morning, moving with the light, their breath mingled with the mist, and rose up from their snouts, colored golden by the rising sun. As the morning warmed up and the sun rose higher, the rhinos moved into the shade. The guards at the camp were preparing tea, and were gracious enough



© Saurabh Sawant

to offer some-much needed refreshment after spending almost 2 hours with the rhinos. The afternoon too was spent with the same 3 rhinos, they had moved to a different patch of vegetation, but the trumpeting of elephants close by drove the rhinos into cover. The guide told me that the 2 species usually avoid each other and would not approach the water if the other is around.

We waited for the elephants to emerge from the forest cover but they didn't, instead the rhinos came out and resumed their grazing oblivious and indifferent to our presence. Soon the sun dipped into the horizon and it was time to call it a day. The morning started off on a good note, we drove towards the Mathanguri Inspection Bungalow. I had fond memories from my previous trip of the place. On the way my guide stopped the vehicle, he had spotted the elusive Malayan giant squirrel, up on a tree. This was the first time I was seeing this beauty and was busy taking photographs as it scurried from branch to branch.

Asian Elephant
© Anu Marwah



Mathanguri IB
© Anu Marwah



Malayan Giant Squirrel
© Anu Marwah



Golden Langur
© Anu Marwah

A while later, I realized that there were 2 of them, it was a pair, but they never came close enough to fit into one frame. I spent a good hour taking pictures, sometimes just looking at them, and then finally moved towards our destination. The Mathanguri IB is on a small hillock by the banks of the Manas river. The river bed is lined with white rocks, and you can walk up to the banks. On

the far side of the river lies Bhutan, many Bhutanese nationals use the road going through the Park to enter into India to stock up on some supplies or perhaps travel further inland or even abroad. The forest around the IB is inhabited by a few troops of Capped Langurs and it's quite easy to locate them if you get there early in the morning or if you are staying at the IB.

photo opportunities. I got talking to some of the guards and asked about the Golden Langurs and where I could find them. I was pleasantly surprised to know that there were a few thriving populations of the golden langur outside the Park near villages. They told me about the community conservation programme run by the villagers to save the species and decided to visit the place the next day. During the afternoon drive I discussed with my guide about making arrangements to the village to see the golden langurs, as we drove along the forest track which had a thick bamboo cover on both sides, almost like a bamboo tunnel coupled by tall trees. My guide

excitedly pointed up to the tree branch hanging low over the path and said Malayan giant squirrels, I had already had my fill of the squirrel in the morning, out in the open morning light, I didn't even react. And when I finally looked up, I realized, it was not 1 but 2 yellow-throated martens, sitting side by side.



Bengal Florican
© Anu Marwah

My guide checked with the forest guards and pointed me to the direction where the langurs were. They were feeding on the fruit trees right behind the guard quarters. Although wary of humans as the guards usually shoo them away, to save the fruit trees, the langurs did oblige with some good



Bengal Floricans in flight
© Hirak Majumdar



Golden-headed Cisticola
© Ashish Dalela

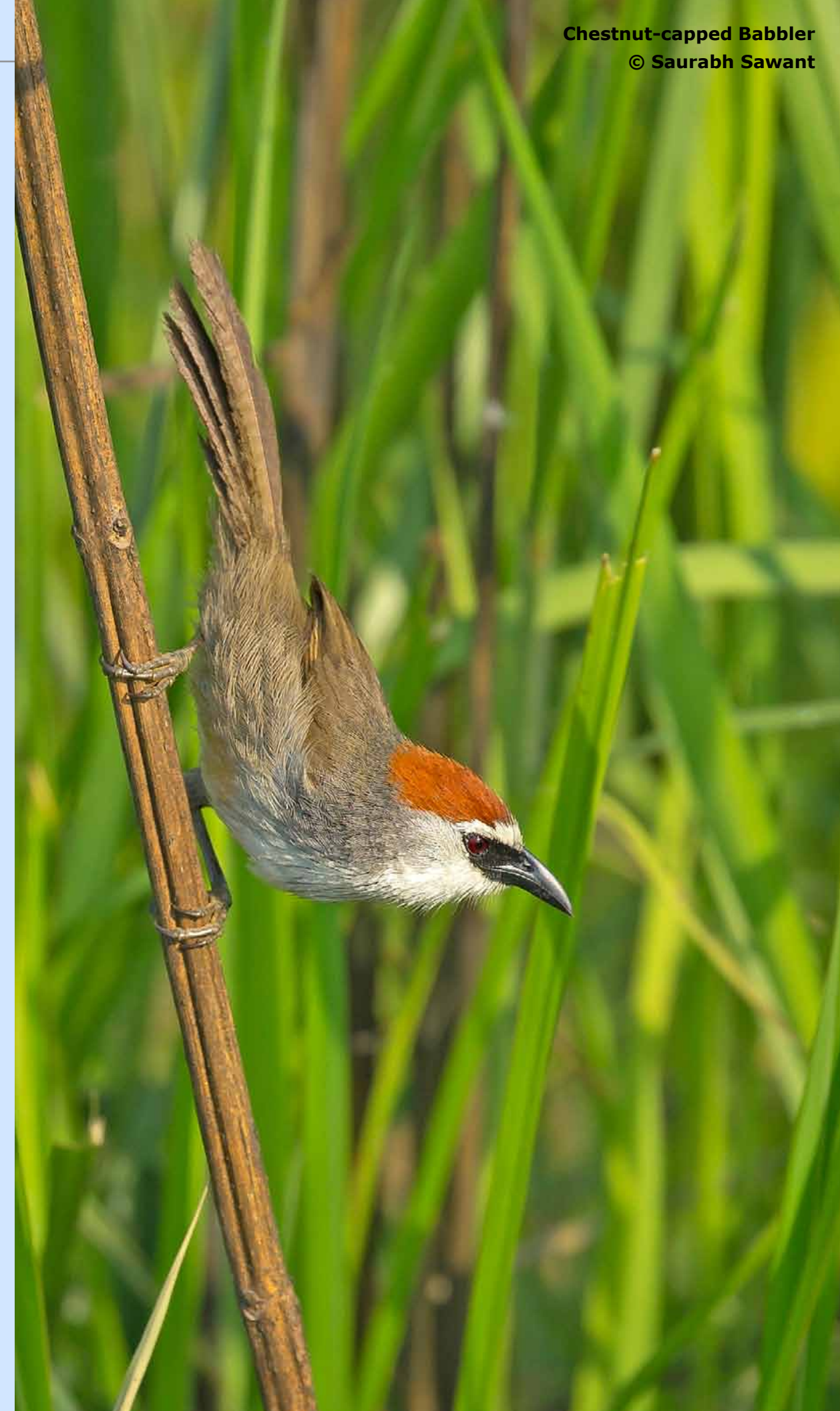


Great Hornbill
© Sankhasubhra Adhikari

But as they say, you snooze, you loose, I was late looking up, and by the time I reached for my camera they were off into the thickets. Now that is one shot I regret missing, but then I thought had he said marten in the first place I might have managed a shot or two.

On my last day at Manas, I drove with my guide to a village 30 kms away from the park to take my chances with the golden langurs. The striking thing about most villages in the North East is the cleanliness, and I somehow feel proud of the fact. No matter how impoverished a household is, there is always a neat fence, with some flowers and a few banana trees, chickens and cows in the back yard. The man in charge of the community protection programme knew my guide and immediately took us to where the langurs were foraging in the trees along the fields. It was a sight to see! While a few men and women tended to their fields, these precious and rare langurs sat in the trees in clear sight and were completely at ease. We approached the troop and I spent the entire morning photographing them and learning about the community's initiatives to save and protect the species. It was one of the most satisfying mornings of the trip. The village plans to start promoting tourism to earn some revenue to further their work and also as a mode to provide meaningful means of substance to the village. I saw some home stays being built and the planting of fruit bearing trees to provide for the langurs. The community head invited us to his house and offered some refreshments and soon after paying our dues and respects, we drove back to Manas.

Manas is magical, it is a paradise which has been ravaged by militancy but is on its way back to its previous glory. The gory past has driven away or dwindled the numbers of many species, it has made the denizens of the forest fear humans, but the hard work and efforts put in by dedicated people is slowly but surely restoring the balance. Primates formed my special photographic interest in Manas and I spent hours with the capped langurs around the Mathanguri IB and the golden langurs near the fringes of the park.





Black-breasted Parrotbill

© Saurabh Sawant

The **Black-breasted Parrotbill** is one of India's rarest and least seen birds. Manas National Park is one of the very few areas where you can sight this skulker. It is threatened by habitat destruction and inappropriate grassland management and is placed in the **Vulnerable** category in IUCN Red List.



Burmese Python
© Hirak Majumdar

Manas forms the perfect habitat for some of the rarest cat species of India. Apart from tigers, the forest has recorded Clouded Leopard, Leopard Cat, Marbled Cat, Golden Cat, Jungle Cat and the Melanistic Leopard. The density of cats and nocturnal activity of the Park has been aptly recorded in the film - Manas: The Return Of Giants - and its a clear testimony of the cat-life of the forest. Though the dense forest cover and thick undergrowth makes tracking and sighting tough, in the last decade, tiger sightings in Manas have improved and tigers were seen during my visits to the park too, though I am yet to open my account. I have just touched the tip of the iceberg in Manas and a lot still needs to be explored. As the years go by, propelled with tourism and effective park management, the park will surely gain the status it deserves and will be a key destination in Assam's tourism map.



Capped Langur
© Anu Marwah



Assam Roofed Turtle

© Anu Marwah



Asian Elephants

© Saurabh Sawant

An ex-IT Marketing professional, Anuradha Marwah has worked with Microsoft and NIIT. She gave up the corporate world five years ago to pursue wildlife photography. She now travels extensively across national parks and is a wildlife travel & photography evangelist. Her love for nature and exposure to wildlife began in Assam while growing up amongst the lush green tea estates in the Brahmaputra Valley. Her photographs and writings have been featured on prominent magazines, websites, books and have, over the years, earned her many awards and accolades.





Red-eyed Tree Frog



Agalychnis callidryas, better known as the Red-eyed Tree Frog, is one adorable amphibian. With bright red eyes, colorful sides, and an extremely expressive face, it's hard not to be captivated by this wonderful frog. These amphibians are arboreal, meaning they spend a lot of time hiding in the trees and are masters of disguise. These crafty amphibians can defy gravity and cling to leaves, sticks, and even glass. This image was taken in Costa Rica.

Rio Grande Valley

A Birding Haven

Suraj Ramamurthy
Sambath Subbaiah



Red-winged Black bird



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

© Suraj Ramamurthy



© Suraj Ramamurthy

Northern Bobwhite female

Long-billed Thrasher



© Suraj Ramamurthy

We have seen some great bird images made from this particular area of south Texas called the Rio Grande Valley, more specifically, the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It is where the Rio Grande River meets the Gulf of Mexico, and is considered one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America. Over 500 species of birds have been documented here. During migratory times, species from the Central and Mississippi flyway end up funnelling through this region. Plus, many birds from South and Central America reach the northernmost point of their range on the Rio Grande, with some not migrating any farther north.

Northern Bobwhite male



© Suraj Ramamurthy



Long-billed Thrasher

© Suraj Ramamurthy



Black-crested Titmouse

© Suraj Ramamurthy

Northern Cardinal Female

© Suraj Ramamurthy



The Valley is where four climates, temperate, desert, coastal and sub-tropical, converge. This diversity helps support 1,200 plant species, which in turn attracts and supports all these species of birds. It also helps support an abundance of reptiles, mammals and insects, including butterflies, who also migrate through this area. This is also where a number of photography ranches have been started. The best time to visit Rio Grande ranches is during the migration time in April/ May of the year.



Curve-billed Thrasher

© Suraj Ramamurthy

Laguna Seca ranch provides ample opportunities to create stunning images of a variety of birds.



Green Jay
© Sambath Subbaiah



Groove-billed Ani
© Suraj Ramamurthy



Northern Cardinal male
© Sambath Subbaiah

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
© Sambath Subbaiah



Although not the good season to visit in February, Suraj had a chance to transit through Houston while he was travelling for work. He decided to spend a weekend at one of the wildlife/photography ranches Laguna seca ranch near Edinburg, Texas. He booked a visit for 2 days through their website and everything was handled professionally and was allotted a guide.

The day arrived as he landed in Houston from Paris and drove 5 hours to Edinburg, called the guide and decided the meet up. The first day morning well before sunrise, he met the guide and drove to the ranch. Since that being an offseason for all the target birds, star attractions were Green Jay, Curve-billed thrasher, Long-billed Thrasher, Black-crested titmouse, Desert cardinal or Pyrrhuloxia, Northern Cardinal, Northern Bobwhite Quail, Golden-fronted Woodpecker etc. Many raptors are resident found throughout the year like Crested Caracara. Suraj had a wonderful time shooting the birds for two full days and eagerly booked again for May to visit during Spring/summer migration.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker
© Suraj Ramamurthy



Pyrrhuloxia Male
© Suraj Ramamurthy

Many raptors are resident throughout the year.



Turkey Vulture

© Sambath Subbaiah

Crested Caracara



©Suraj Ramamurthy

Crested Caracara mating



© Sambath Subbaiah



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
© Sambath Subbaiah

Migratory birds include the Painted Bunting, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Cedar Waxwing, Summer Tanager and others.



Summer Tanager
© Sambath Subbaiah





Blue Grosbeak
© Suraj Ramamurthy



Groove-billed Ani
© Suraj Ramamurthy



Cedar Waxwing
© Suraj Ramamurthy



Painted Bunting
© Suraj Ramamurthy.



Suraj Ramamurthy



Sambath Subbaiah



Painted Bunting
© Sambath Subbaiah

On The Bud!

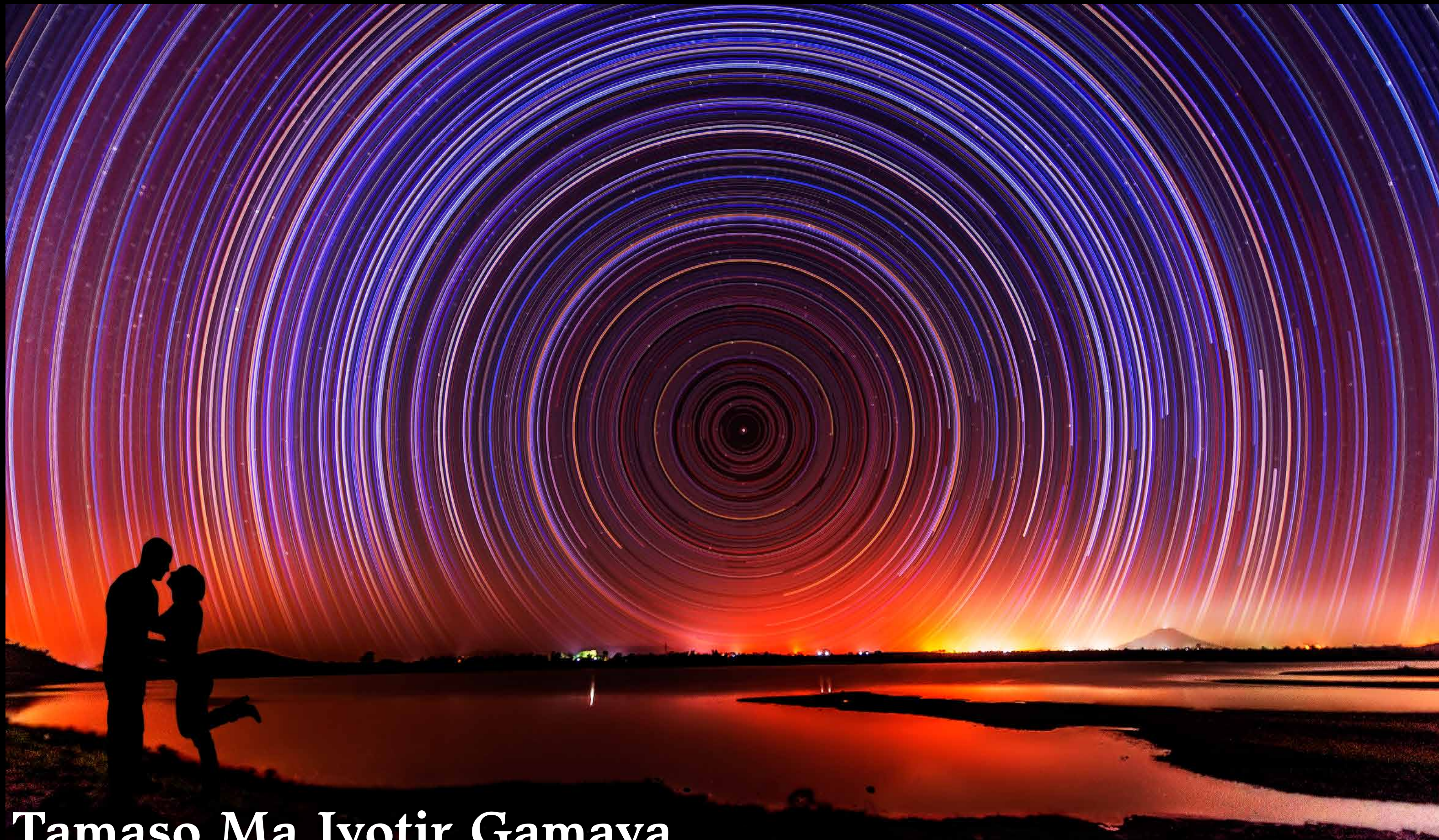


© Nagendra Bhat



© Manoj Iritty





Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya

From Darkness Towards Light

Five years back, one of my friends took me to a nearby jungle to roam during the night and do some night photography.

I had the least idea about what we were going to do. We stopped in a nice spot, cooked some "khichdi" and tried to take some photographs, without really knowing how. I didn't even have a wide-angle lens, and the widest lens I had was 50mm f/1.8. I took all my images with it and as I viewed my images the following day on my computer, I fell in love with the photographs. A new kind of photography which was way too different than the normal wildlife photography I used to do and I got hooked. Of course then onwards I ventured out and did it more often. I read a lot and watched the work of many astro-photographers.

I reside in a small tribal town. As I didn't know anybody who worked in this field, my only available resource was internet. Initially it was very, very difficult and I had to try and figure out every difficulty and hurdle that came in my way. I persevered and I could develop my unique style. As people came across my images, some said they were oversaturated; some said the night sky doesn't look like what I portrayed in my images. But I believe the night sky is dark black in New Moon night to light grayish in Full Moon night. There is no written rule that you must portray night sky only in shades of blue. The sky looks different from different planets and from space due to difference in atmospheres. So, I tried to show it according to my photographic subject, need & color of my mood.

Astrophotography is the name given to the process of taking pictures of anything not on the Earth, but out in space and the photograph includes Moon, Sun, planets of our Solar System, galaxies and nebulae.

There are many forms of astrophotography:-

- Astrophotography landscape, in which you blend outer space objects with earthly landscape (which is my kind of photography, I love it because you have freedom to explore at your potential and need not be stereotypic).
- Record astrological events, like conjunction of planets, lunar eclipse, solar eclipse, supermoon etc.
- Deep sky object photography, in which you need telephoto lens or telescope to photograph planets, galaxies and nebulae.



Face on Mars

Learning to shoot star trails:

Star trail is a type of image that makes use of a long-exposure technique to capture motion of stars in the night sky. Actually stars don't move but the apparent motion is caused due to the rotation of the Earth. A star trail photograph shows individual stars as streaks across the image, with longer exposures resulting in longer streaks.

Whether you will get trails or not is decided by the Rule Of 500. Divide 500 by the focal length of your lens, if you have a full frame body. Example :- If you have a 20mm lens; you will get dotted stars only if you put your shutter speed below $500/20 = 25$ secs, otherwise you get trails instead of dots.

If you have a cropped sensor body you will get even less time. I call it the Rule Of 325. Divide 325 by your lens's focal length. Example :- If you have a 20mm lens; you will get dotted stars only if you put your shutter speed below $325/20 = 16$ secs.

Due to our Earth's rotation on its axis, we have sunrise, sunset, moonrise and moonset from east to west. Like that we got rotation of celestial objects around our poles in the nights. That's why we get circular streaks in our photographs, around north celestial pole in the northern hemisphere and around south celestial pole in the southern hemisphere.

To achieve such photographs, we put our camera on a sturdy tripod, composed for the shot and clicked more than hundreds of long exposure(20-30 secs) images with high ISO(2500 or more) and wide aperture(as low as your lens allows), without moving a millimeter. As a result, we got uniform images with the only difference being the movement of celestial objects in all the pictures. We stacked all these together while post processing to achieve one single image, which in fact contains hours of exposure. This method is known as the Multiple Image Stacking Method.

Advantages of this method are many. You can

easily calculate the correct exposure. If one or two images are ruined then you can easily remove only those particular images and see to it that your whole session is not ruined. Disadvantages of this method are there too. There is simply too much data to process at home. As the exposure is shorter than one single image, higher ISO needs to be used, usually above 2500, resulting in more noise.

The other method is known as the Single Exposure Image, in which we must calculate correct exposure time, put camera in bulb mode and leave it for more than a few hours, with minimum ISO and wide aperture, so after completion we get a single image having the star trails.

Disadvantage of this method is the difficulty in calculating the correct exposure. If you make a mistake in calculation, your image is overexposed(fully blown white image) or underexposed(pitch dark image), ruining the whole session. If someone waves light nearby then also it spoils your whole image. Advantage of this method are, only one image to process at home, exposure is longer than multiple images so minimum ISO, usually 100, so less noise or no noise. Nearby artificial lights are the pollution for such photographs. So, prefer no light or low light area for astrophotography.

Star trails at Haranbari Dam : Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.5, 20 secs, ISO 3200, No Flash, digital stack of 440 images

Unlike other photographs, astrophotographs are very much informative. One photograph reveals many secrets, if you can read it well.



Pinpoint star in the middle of the circle is the polaris @ Haranbari dam

Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm 2.8/f, 14mm, 3.5/f, 20sec., 3200 ISO, No Flash, Digital stack of 440 Images

Like in this image,

- Pin point star is brighter, so it is Polaris. And I did my star trail in the northern hemisphere. If I did it in the southern hemisphere, then I can get a faint southern polar star which is Sigma Octantis.
- Polaris is on the right side of the image so I put my wide angle lens directed to North-West.
- Polaris is not the exact pin point because it is not exactly aligning with our north axis but is minutely away from it, so it's comma shaped.
- Polaris is situated about 20 degrees from horizon, which suggested that I shoot this image from latitude around 20 degree. So, if I do star trail at the Equator then Polaris should be visible at the horizon and if from North Pole, it's above my head, so in both the conditions we can hardly see Polaris in our photographs, so the best latitude to get circular trails with earthly landscape is between 20 degree to 30 degree.
- Every star gives a distinct color of streaks and it depends upon the age and

temperature of that star. Purple color streaks are given by younger stars and red color streaks are given by older stars.

- Light shown on the left side of the horizon is due to sunset, so I started taking this image just after sunset.
- Vertical streaks just beside the Polaris on the right side is due to the passage of IDEFIX/ARIANE 42P satellite during star trail. There are websites which suggest the passage of satellite during a particular time across a place, if you feed direction, latitude and longitude of that place with exact date and time.
- Even it reveals the degree of light and air pollution of that particular place by showing or not showing streaks at the horizon.
- If you get reflection as mirror in water, it means that the particular time is not windy and water is still and shallow.
- By coverage of star trails and land in photographs, you can even judge, that I used wide angle lens, 16mm or less, on my full frame camera.



Shadow of Venus

Shadow of Venus:

Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm, f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.2, 30 secs, ISO 2000, No Flash, digital stack of 130 images

You clearly see a shadow of Venus on the right side of the bigger log of wood on the ground. I removed the trail of Venus and represented it as one dot. The light reflection on the extreme right of the ground is made by light pollution of city about 15 kms away from this place. Even the photograph caught reflection of lights from boats at the horizon on the left side of the wet ground. Difference in colors is due to LED light used by boatmen to recognize their boats from a distance.

Ruins of Paddhargadh:

Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.2, 30 secs, ISO 3200, No Flash, HDR, digital stack of 320 images

Ruins of Paddhargadh, Manjal, Kutch also known as Vadi Medi is a mysterious

place near Nakhatrana. Here I shot north facing star trails. Some say it's a 10th century fort, built by Raja Punvaro and destroyed by Yaksh(Jakh). Spending a whole night with this monument was a fascinating experience.

Self portrait:

Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.2, 30 secs, ISO 4000, No Flash, HDR, digital stack of 300 images

In this photograph, I tried to capture the beautiful Tal Laiyari rock formation in Kutch, Gujarat, with my self portrait. Colors and formations of rocks in a small area between two villages amaze you. I shot the foreground just after sunset in exposure bracketing to create HDR, then I started shooting star trails. As you see in the photograph, I pointed my camera exactly in North-East direction to get a circular trail on the left side of my image.



Self-portrait



Ruins of Paddhargadh



Confrontation with Evil: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 24mm, f/3.5, 20 secs, ISO 1600, No Flash, digital stack of 350 images

Here I tried to create a story of confrontation of a man with evil in the dark night. To do so, I surveyed and found one graveyard away from light pollution and public disturbances. I went with three of my friends on one chilly New Moon night after 12AM, to avoid explanation and conversation with locals, as the village is hardly 500 meters away from that graveyard. I preferred intense

blue WB, to show it's a chilly atmosphere created by the presence of evil. We chose late night in winter to catch the fog to mystify the image. I light painted two proximal graves with a tree behind it. I asked one of my friends to stand with a torch and another one to stand in front of the torch and made the image which shows a man who encounters evil by seeing some mysterious aura of light. We spent around 4-5 hours there. Though I don't believe in supernatural things, the atmosphere and surroundings were really horrifying.

Rising Venus with cloud trails



Moses meets GOD



Moses meets GOD: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/2.8, 30secs, ISO 2500, No Flash, digital stack of 200 images

Moses(Musa) meets God by burning bush on Mount Sinai. In the biblical narrative, the burning bush is the location at which Moses was appointed by Adonai(God) to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

I did my bible series in Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat. This image belongs to that album. I have tried to tell stories of The Bible by this series.

I took a truck light to depict burning bush. I changed WB to make sky pinkish to portrait omnipresence of God. North star trails delineate as God guides Musa by his thumpy voice.

Rising Venus with cloud trails: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/14, 20 secs, ISO 400, No Flash

In the early morning, I just turned the direction of my camera and clicked the image above. It shows a riot of colors and cloud trails due to low shutter speed. Tweak of Venus makes this image perfect.

Night Photography

I use my slow shutter skill in post-dusk or pre-dawn photography also. It's the most beautiful and picturesque time of the day. If you learn to click during these hours you can amaze your viewers by your creativity. These are the few examples of it.



Dal lake from my eyes

Dal lake through my eyes: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 21mm, f/13, 25 secs, ISO 100, No Flash

Image taken in late evening after sunset, while sailing in a shikara at Dal Lake, Srinagar, Kashmir.



Meeting



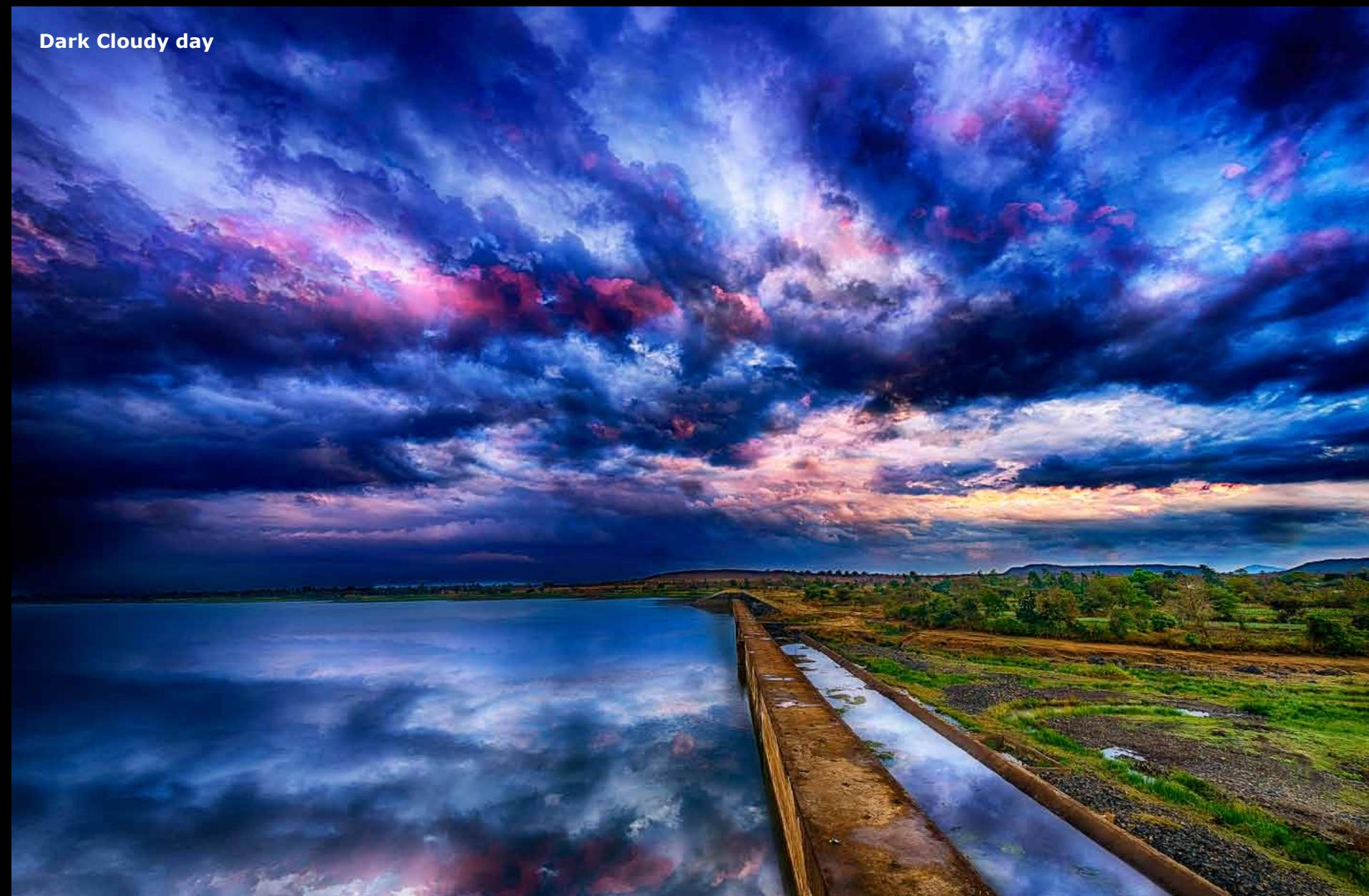
Monsoon clouds

Monsoon clouds: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/5, 5 secs, ISO 1000, No Flash.

Below image was taken at high ISO just after it got dark, but still western side shows some signs of sunset.

Dark cloudy day: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 10mm, f/10, 2 secs, ISO 50, No Flash, Manual stack of 15 images, HDR

In this picture, I have showed the beauty of monsoon clouds. I manually stacked 15 images, 5 for HDR and 10 clicked in different white balance and merged it seamlessly to see what I visualise in them. It's an image of a small nearby dam with some historic importance.



Dark Cloudy day



Endurance: Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.2, 25 secs, ISO 2000, No Flash, HDR, focus stack, digital stack of 330 Images

Faith in yourself gives you the courage to survive even in devastating conditions. You can't be courageous just by being happy every day. Tough times also create opportunities to experience intense emotions and create a litmus test for your relations. I made this image with tons of difficulties, beside a busy highway of Saurashtra. We encountered two nuisance groups and two police groups. All tried to create trouble without understanding why we were there. They asked us to leave that place which

was a barren land. Nothing was disturbed by our presence yet the policemen literally pulled us out from that place, by saying that it's not safe for us at that time of the night.

You need a lot of courage, guts, stubbornness, patience and passion to do night photography. Places, which look familiar and normal in daytime, become intimidating as night passes. We heard hyenas' howling and leopard's roar nearby many times. But the most frightening is encounter with local groups larger than yours. Usually we hide ourselves when we see or hear some movements nearby, to avoid any altercation with them.

Wishing tree (Kalpavruksh): Nikon D810A, Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8, at 14mm, f/3.2, 20 secs, ISO 2000, No Flash
During one of our workshops, we sat behind a hill to get this image. A road passes through on the other side. The light on the tree was made with passing truck headlamps.

In the sky you can see one of the shooting stars of that night due to the Geminid meteor shower. Lights of nearby village reflected through remnants of low level thunderstorm clouds and gave visual effects like Aurora Borealis on the horizon left to the tree.



Dr Hitesh Patel

By profession I am a physician (MD, Int. Medicine), having a hospital in Vyara, a small town in Gujarat. I love photography and roaming in the wild. I started my journey of astrophotography essentially to get rid of the boredom of wildlife and bird photography that I used to do. Every time when I poured my card in my PC, I got disappointed by same stereotypic shots, most of the shots were like my adjoining shots or similar to the person beside me. I was searching for a new kind of photography in which I have plenty of freedom and scope to play with compositions and colors. Hence my foray into this field which has bestowed me with every bit of happiness and peace I had aspired for.



Image Of The Month - May



Prey and Predator

Tapan D Sheth

Emotions

Anja Wessels



Grey Old Man

A monochrome version of a portrait of Mike the Chimpanzee in Dierenpark Amersfoort.

Primates are the closest relatives humans have in the animal kingdom. The facial emotions which characterise man are found in primates too. Anja Wessels just loves to catch these facial expressions in these furry creatures. These images are taken in zoo and are represented here as an art form of animal photography.



The Perfect Model

Beautiful female Gorilla in the Apenheul in The Netherlands. Grace and elegance personified.



Primate Lord

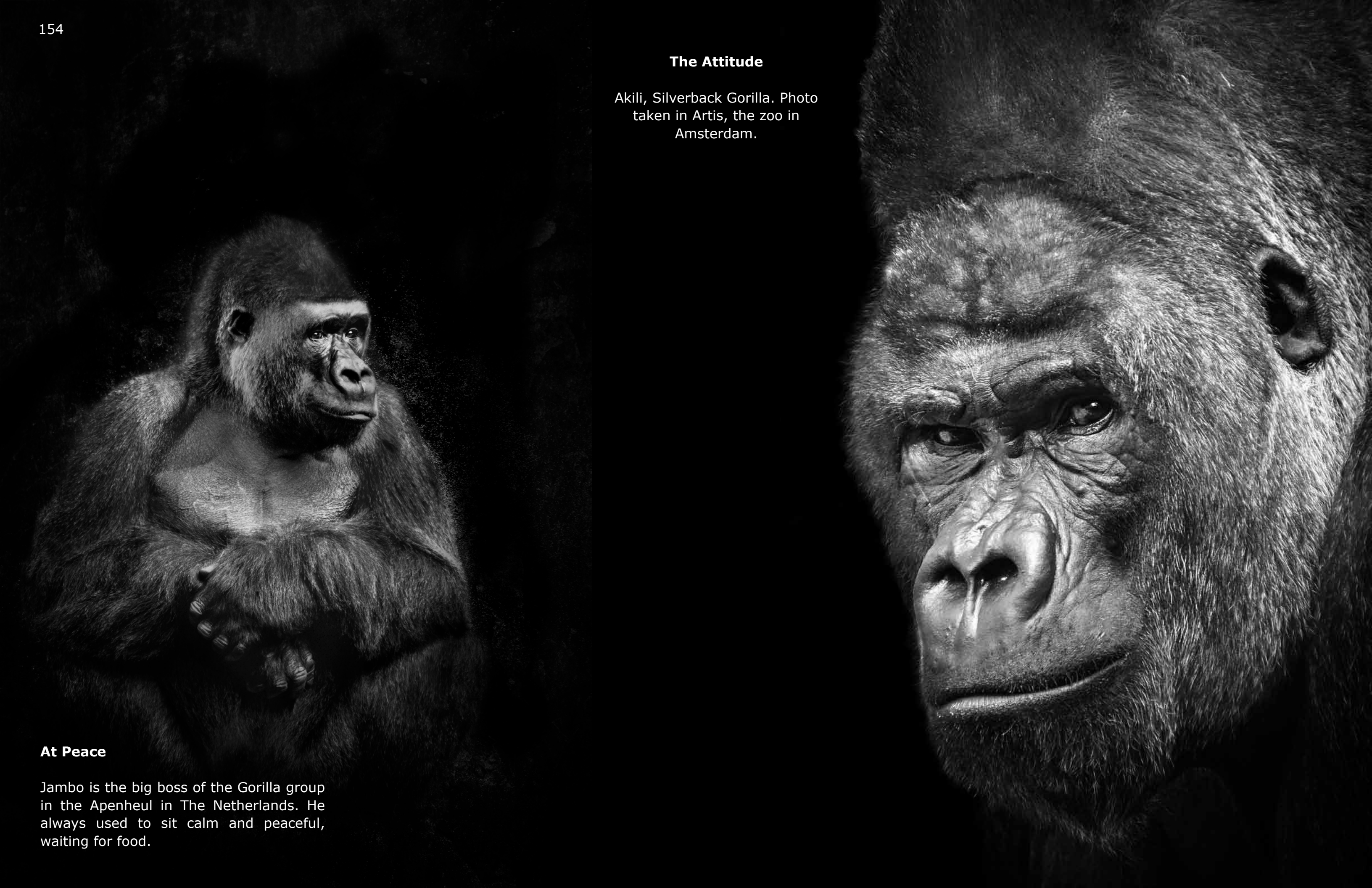
This is Bokito, the famous Silverback Gorilla in Blijdorp, the zoo in Rotterdam. An amazing, impressive animal.

The Attitude

Akili, Silverback Gorilla. Photo taken in Artis, the zoo in Amsterdam.

At Peace

Jambo is the big boss of the Gorilla group in the Apenheul in The Netherlands. He always used to sit calm and peaceful, waiting for food.

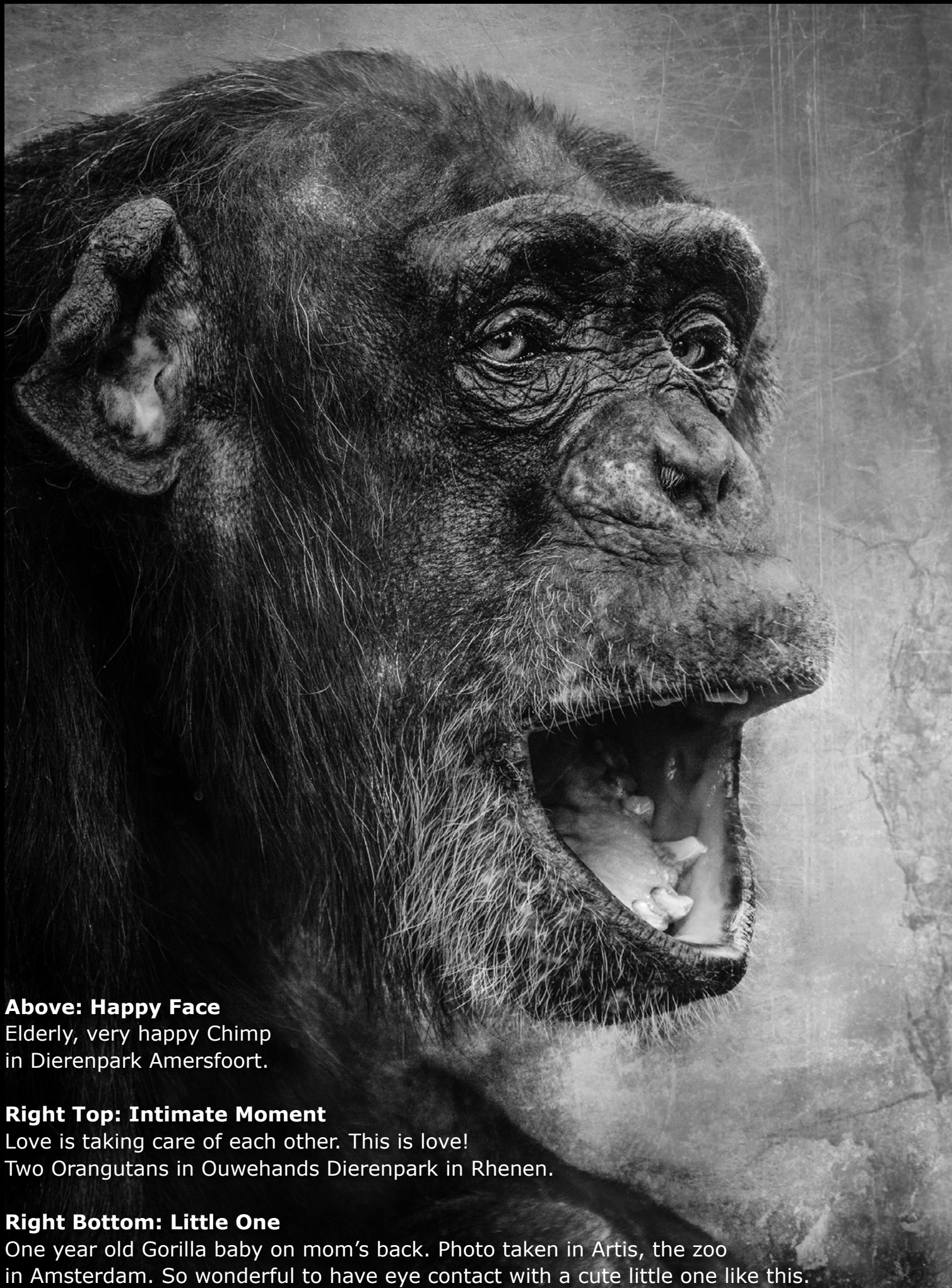


The Twins

Twins are always very special to me, especially since I have twins myself, two sons. When I saw this trio in Burgers Zoo I melted completely. Such a beautiful sight!

Mother N'Gayla with her two kids N'Kato and N'Hasa. The twins were born on June 13, 2013.





Above: Happy Face

Elderly, very happy Chimp
in Dierenpark Amersfoort.

Right Top: Intimate Moment

Love is taking care of each other. This is love!
Two Orangutans in Ouwehands Dierenpark in Rhenen.

Right Bottom: Little One

One year old Gorilla baby on mom's back. Photo taken in Artis, the zoo
in Amsterdam. So wonderful to have eye contact with a cute little one like this.



The Boss



Mike is the beautiful gray old boss at Amersfoort Zoo. Mike is 51 which is very old for a Chimp. For years he was the leader of the group and he is still respected.

My name is Anja Wessels. I'm a nature photographer living in Raalte in The Netherlands. In the past 4 years I went from buying my first DSLR to being a passionate, may be even obsessed photographer. I love hiking, taking my camera and shooting everything I like. But I also love shooting flowers at home. My absolute favorite subject are animals. Visiting zoos and parks, making animal portraits. Trying to grasp an emotion, expression, showing the beauty and personality of the animal. Back home, more fun starts. Post processing the photos. Photography changed my life. This may sound a bit extreme, but it is true. Like many these days, I ran through life, always in a hurry. I never took the time to really look and see all the beautiful things around me. Photography made me see, made me open my eyes. Seeing beauty makes life a lot more fun. I urge everybody to take up photography. You don't need a state of the art camera. A smartphone does it too. Simply really look at the world around you and see the beauty there is and enjoy. It is very important to me to work on my photography and post processing skills. I love learning new things. Working on photos, starting over and over, till I reach the effect I want is important. I'm showing a selection of my black and white animal portraits. Portraits of animals with a strong expression, emphasized by processing them in a dark background.



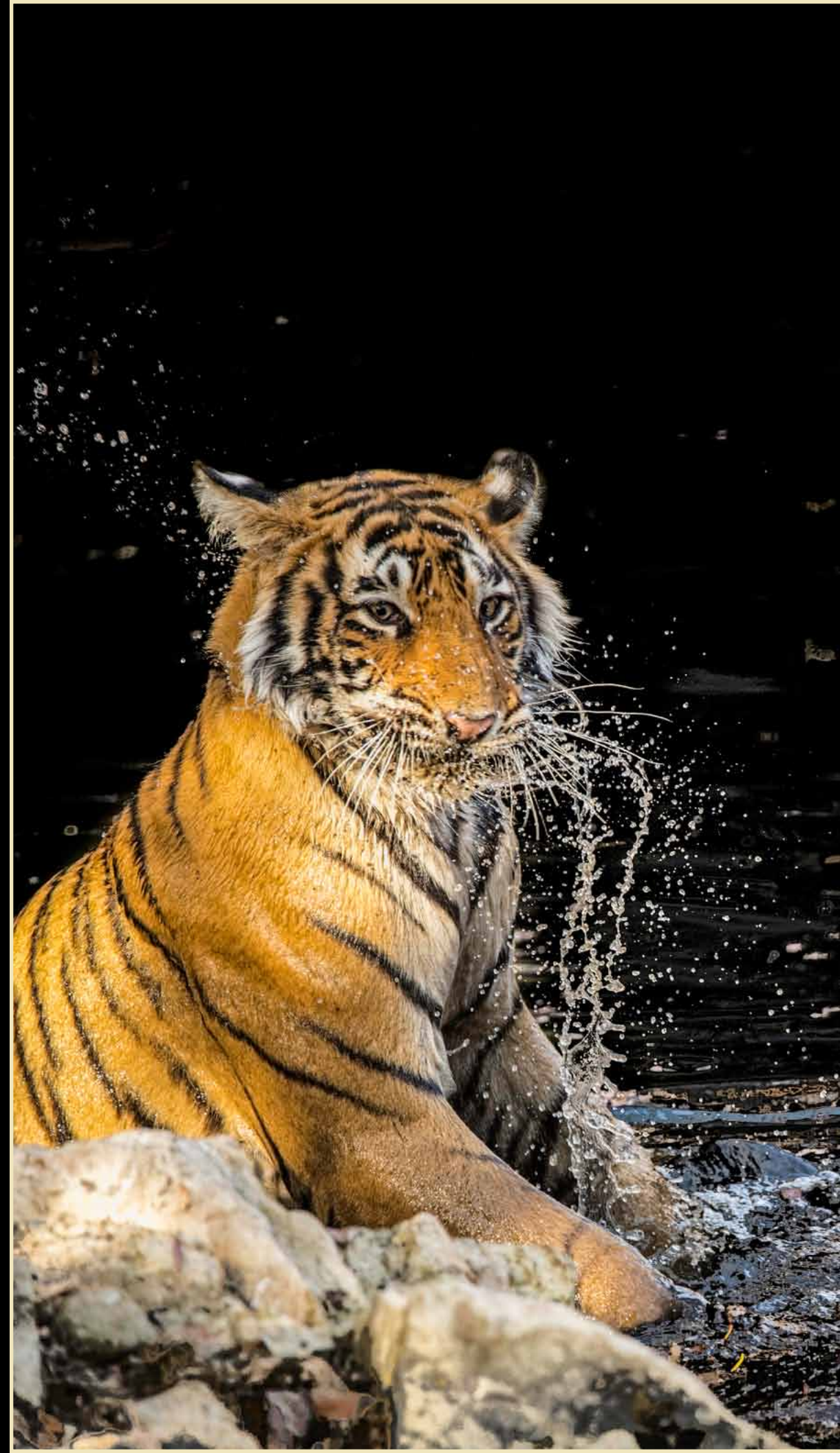
Website: <http://anjawessels.nl/>
Google +: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/+AnjaWessels>

Text & Images by Anja Wessels

Tiger Splash

With just half an hour in to the morning safari, we took for zone 2 in Ranthambhore, we were surprised by the majestic presence of T-60 with her three sub-adult cubs right in the middle of the road. They were playing, cuddling and marking their territory and doing all sort of things when one of them wandered into the small water pond to refresh itself from the heat.

Being fascinated by the presence of the dead leaves floating on the water he constantly kept on splashing the surface of the pond with his paw so as to ascertain if it was alive and can be tasted as a meal. Thats when he tried to immerse his face trying to grab the leaf and made a turnaround giving me this exceptional shot.



Navneet Singh

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin

Prized Catch



The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is a regular visitor as a southward passage migrant to Thar Desert in Rajasthan in the months of August and September. It breeds in Afghanistan and NW Pakistan. A bird is referred to as passage migrant in the regions where they occur for short duration, during migration, between the origin and destination. Being a geologist in Oil India Limited often requires me to spend considerable time in the Thar Desert. I was in a drilling camp near the international border in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan in the month of September 2016 for a period of 14 days. Because of availability of water and shade from scorching heat of the desert, a lot of passage migrants visited the place and stayed for several days. Also, a lot of insects get attracted to the light in the camp, at night. These are also easy picking for the birds. Such settlements in the middle of barren desert act as great place for the migrating birds where they can halt for a few days to take rest, replenish themselves with food and water. This bird was also one of the several passage migrants that visited the place during my stay. [The co-ordinates of the place are: Latitude: 27°-48'-9.3" N ; Longitude: 70°-08'-37.2" E ; Date:19.09.2016]



Pranjal J. Saikia

Greater Flamingo





Greater Flamingo adult



Sunset view

There are six distinct species of flamingos and the Greater Flamingo is the most widespread species. The word "flamingo" comes from the Spanish and Latin word "flamenco" which means fire, and refers to the bright color of the birds' feathers. Not all flamingos are brightly colored, however, and some of the birds are mostly gray or white. Younger birds also have less coloration. The strength of a flamingo's coloration comes from its diet. The color pink comes from beta-carotene in the crustaceans and plankton that flamingos eat. Flamingos in zoos will turn white if their diet is not supplemented with meat containing carotenoid pigments. Flamingos flock in groups of up to several hundred birds. They often perform their mating displays together. However, different species and even different flocks will put a slightly different spin on their communal rituals. An adult flamingo's legs can be 30-50 inches long, which is longer than their

entire body. Flamingos often stand on one leg to preserve body heat, tucking the other leg into their plumage so it is kept warm. They will alternate legs to regulate their body temperature.

Greater flamingos have been one of my most favorite subjects in photography. For photographing them I visit Modhava beach, which is a virgin stretch of coast near the Modhava village and the nearest city to it is Mandvi. As per my experience, till today, I have seen more than 2000 flamingos at the Modhava beach.

Flamingos are very shy birds and exhibit a typical flock mentality. To get close to them, I have had to lie down on the sea sand for hours and crawl on all fours. But to capture these magnificent creatures is worth every drop of sweat and every bit of energy spent. Best time for photographing these pink beauties is the time when the sun rises and before few hours of sunset.



The Three Musketeers



Off We Go



Trotting Along

Courtship Display



Three Generations



Courtship Display



Sunset Moods





For capturing greater flamingos I have had to wake up in the wee hours of the morning and travel a distance of 35 to 40 kilometers to reach there at dawn. Modhava beach is such a place where the sun sets in the Arabian Sea. That accords me an opportunity to capture the greater flamingos in the moods of both sunrise and sunset.

Like all flamingos, greater flamingos are social birds. Their flocks can be very large and numerous. The great number of flamingos residing in a single area leaves room for aggressive behaviour between the members of the flock. Sometimes greater flamingo males fight over nest grounds or mates. The males can use their bill to fight or they have been observed chasing each other in the wild. They have other mechanisms of protecting and threatening other small birds. Sometimes due to space reasons they bite each other to go away. I was fortunate to capture their movements and aggressive calls so perfectly.

Bird photography has always brought the best out of me as a person. Greater flamingos in their pink splendour will always remain my most favourite avian pals.

Special thanks to Miss Aditiba Raol for helping me write this article and also thanks to my field partners Mr. Nirav Pomal, Mr. Ashish Gohil, Mr. Mahesh Pamar, Mr. Alok Jethi.



Dilipsinh Chudasama is an extremely dedicated wildlife photographer hailing from Mundra, Gujarat, India. His work can be followed at <https://500px.com/dilipsinhchudasama> and <https://www.facebook.com/DCPhotography07>





A Humanitarian & Honest Appeal

Ashish Dwivedi, born on 29th September, 1969, in Sasni, Hathras district, Uttar Pradesh is a well known wildlife photographer. His father, Late Shankar Dwivedi was a legendary Hindi & Braj Bhasha poet. Married to Chanchal Dwivedi, blessed with two kids (aged 12 and 16) Ashish is a Mathematics teacher by profession, at PBAS Inter College, Hathras. The hardships of life could not expiate his passion for wildlife which he had already developed while accompanying his father on his various trips.

Later, as time passed he started saving for his wild dreams and managed to get some photography equipments. He regularly started visiting tiger sanctuaries & national parks whenever he could take out time from his teaching profession.

Before 2012, he browsed the forests as a wildlife videographer but after 2012 he switched over to still photography. Very soon his works started attracting limelight. His vision & beauty of photography got recognition throughout the globe. Today he is very well known in wildlife lovers' community as a passionate photographer who rules the heart through his master clicks.

Unfortunately on 23rd June 2016, Ashish was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. It is a kind of blood cancer. The cancer is in last stages and the treatment costs along with bone marrow transplant are huge, approximately around Rs. 30 lakhs. Getting setback from his health insurer (with very, very little partial claim settlement) he stands at crossroads to live up to his passion for life and wildlife. An amount of INR 18 lakhs. is already consumed and approximately similar amount is still required.

We wildlife lovers have promoted nature and life, but time now demands to promote and save wildlife lovers themselves. We, from Team Wild Sojourns appeal to our readers to contribute generously and help a fellow wildlifer and a genuine human being.

Deposits can be done in the name of: Ashish Dwivedi
ac no: 00000010660975324
State bank Of India, Hathras Branch
IFSC: SBIN0008743



Sonam with her three Cubs

© Ashish Dwivedi



Great White Pelican

© Ashish Dwivedi

Indian Wolf in Sunderbans

Anupam Mukherjee

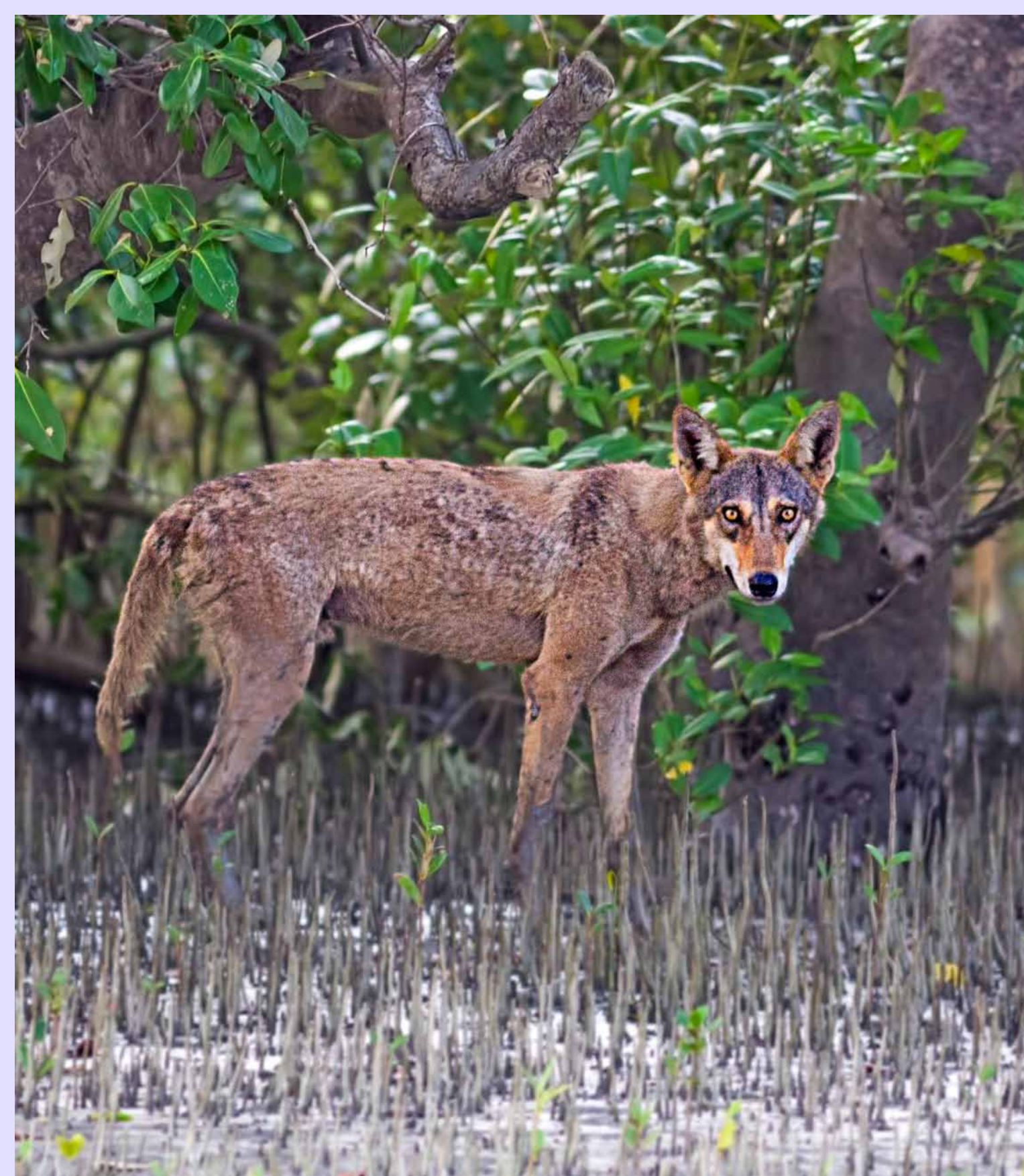
One weekend Anupam Mukherjee happened to go for a trip to Sunderbans with two of his photographer buddies. Initially they had planned to visit Buxa but made a random plan to give a visit to the famous mangroves. They all headed from Kolkata by car on 13th April 2017 and reached their destination. As it was already close to sunset they decided to catch a short ride and were off in a boat. Their old guide and friend Mrityunjay, shared a few anecdotes as usual and also casually mentioned that a new species had been seen roaming around in the forest, and was supposedly taking away live stock from the nearby village- Jyotirampur. They were very thrilled to hear this and headed that way immediately. As the group reached the place where the animal was seen previously, the guide exclaimed and pointed his finger. And there it was, the mystery animal, looking right at them, with its intriguing eyes. As several photographs in different poses were being captured, it slowly turned around and re-entered the forest.

Though while capturing the images all of them thought of it as an Indian Golden Jackal, but later when examined they found strange facial characteristics, such as gray patches on its face

and white marks on its jaws, which are not present in a jackal. They all came to a decision that it was an Indian Wolf, and immediately sent screenshots of the pictures to the known animal experts who all confirmed it as Indian Wolf.

The wolf was spotted near Jyotirampur village in the buffer zone of the Sunderbans. Indian wolf prefers to live in scrublands, grasslands and semi-arid pastoral habitat. This is reportedly the first record of an Indian wolf from a mangrove forest. The sighting is now being investigated by the Forest Department which has installed cameras in the area to record the species for further study. Indian wolves are not found in the Sunderbans region at all where there are no such records in a century! This is a region is where you primarily find large cats. Wolves in Bengal are mostly found in the western part of the state, which shares its border with Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, and live in semi-arid grasslands and scrub lands. How this particular wolf got there is a mystery waiting to be unravelled.

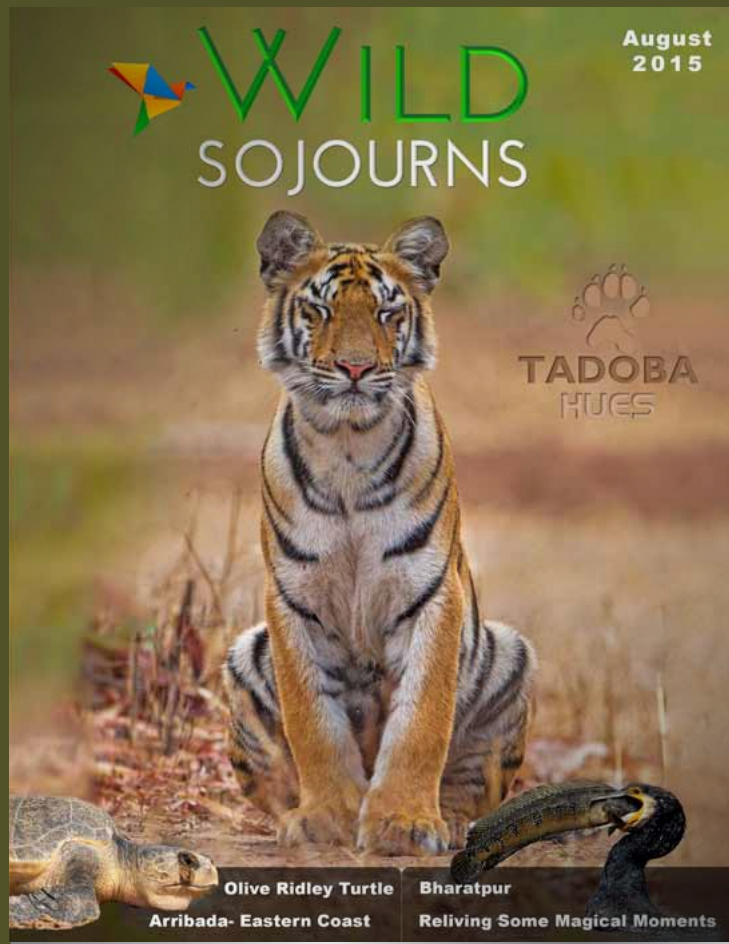
Nevertheless, it sure was an awesome moment for Anupam. A sudden and unexpected encounter of such a unique species made his day...rather made his life!



Wildlife and humans are often found to be intersecting each other's boundaries and these sure cause a lot of troubles at both ends. But it makes us happy as well when certain wildlife sightings happen to be extremely rare!

Wolves are extremely shy by nature, so seeing them in wild is a truly thrilling experience which very few people are privileged to witness. But to document it in a place which is faraway from all its known natural habitats is a once in a lifetime event.

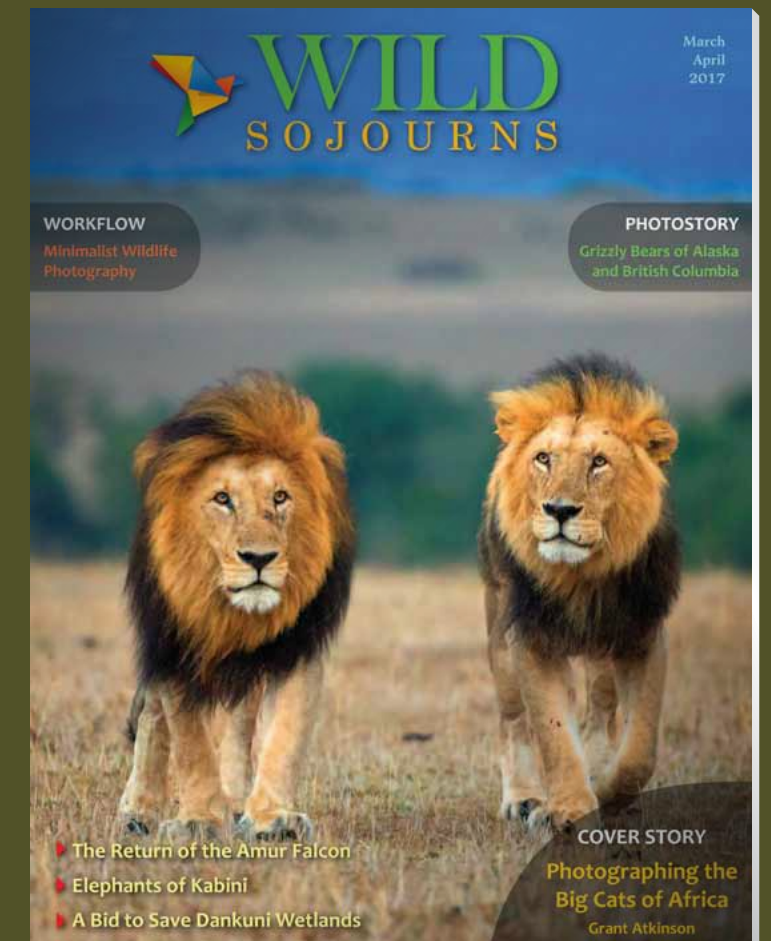
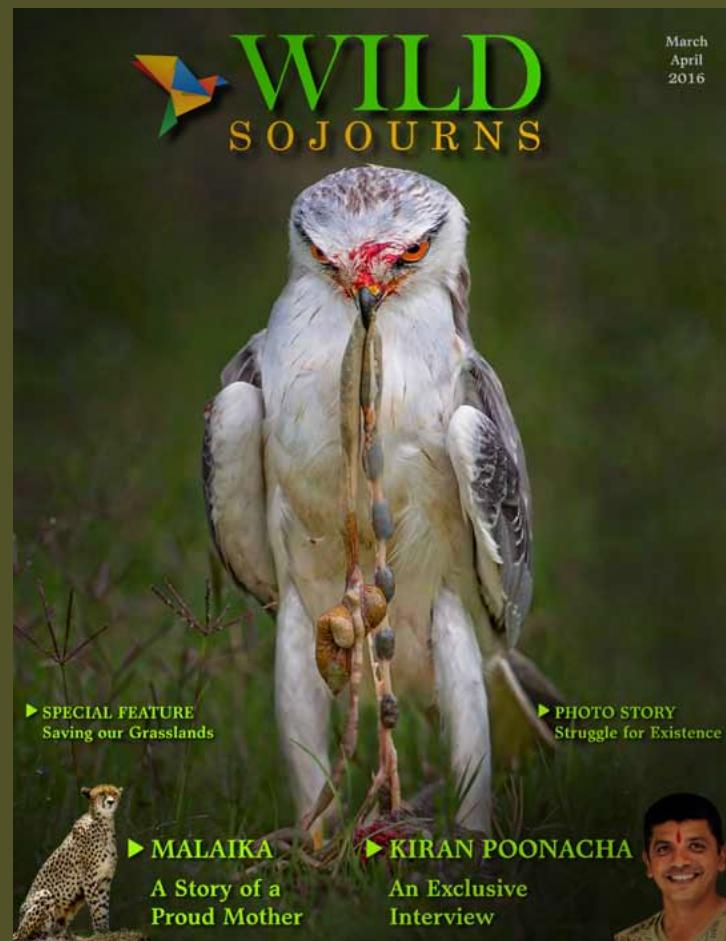
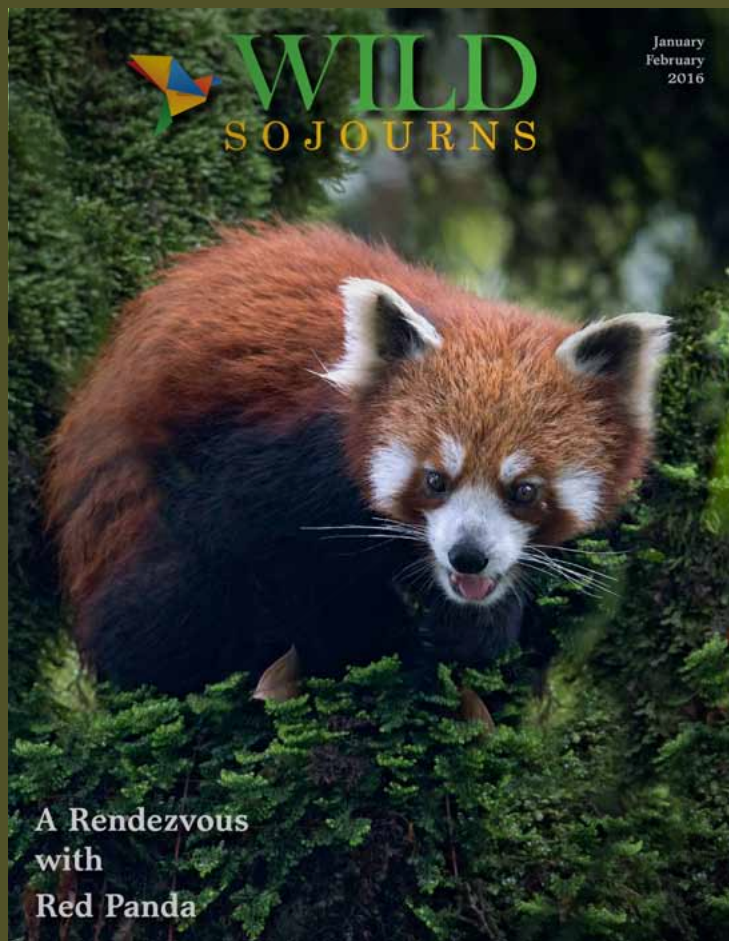
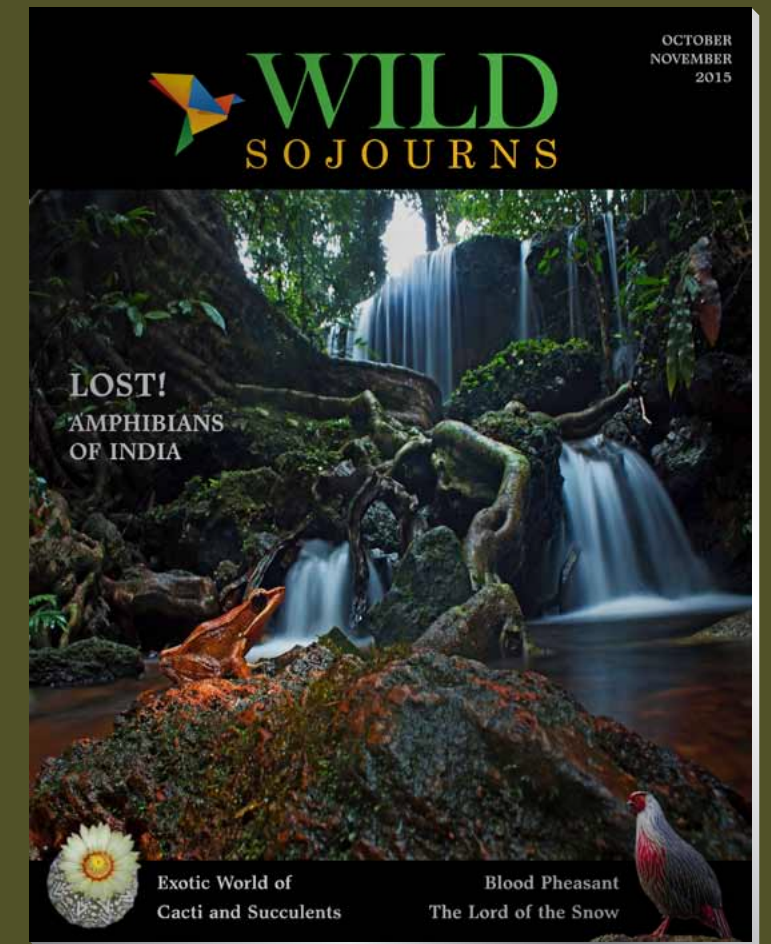




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